



Snake River Dam Removal (Nov. 21, 2006)

On Oct. 6, 2006, three federal executives representing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA Fisheries and BPA issued the following joint statement about removing the four lower Snake River dams.

Federal executives make statement about the four lower Snake River dams

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers spent seven years studying Snake River dam removal. The final environmental impact statement, released in 2002, evaluated four alternatives to help Snake River fall chinook get through the dams.

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducted a comprehensive evaluation of Snake River dam removal,” said Karen Durham-Aguilera, director of programs for the Northwestern Division of the Corps. “The final independent, peer-reviewed study concluded that dam breaching by itself would not recover the fish, would take the longest time to benefit listed fish compared to other alternatives and would be the most uncertain to implement.”

The study’s preferred alternative was major improvements to fish passage

“Our comprehensive recovery program is addressing all the factors that affect salmon – habitat, hatcheries and harvest as well as hydro,” said Bob Lohn, regional director of NOAA Fisheries. “This collaborative program is getting results.”

Only four of the 13 Endangered Species Act-listed fish in the Columbia Basin pass the Snake River. Dam breaching would do nothing to help the other nine, with benefits to the four being uncertain.

The five-year average for 12 of the 13 listed stocks in the Columbia Basin is up significantly from the time they were listed. The most improved is Snake River fall chinook – from 700 returning wild fish at listing in 1992 to the most recent five-year average of more than 4,900 wild fish returning to the Snake River.

“A comprehensive recovery planning process is under way right now with states and tribes, and we are committed to that process,” added Lohn.

Since the study was completed in 2002, some things have changed:

Aggressive nonbreach is being implemented and survival through the dams has improved

In 2002, the Corps installed a “fish slide” at one of the dams, allowing more efficient and less stressful passage for the juvenile fish. Today, there are fish slides at



Lower Granite and Ice Harbor dams, and fish slides are planned for installation at Lower Monumental and McNary dams in 2007. Water is spilled over the dams to help the juvenile fish get past, and survival is 90 to 95 percent at each dam.

Power replacement costs have increased

In 2002, the Corps environmental impact statement estimated \$271 million annually to replace the lost hydroelectric power. With today's high power costs, the range is more like \$350 million to \$500 million annually.

Concerns about air emissions have escalated

In 2002, the Corps EIS assumed that the electricity from the lower Snake River dams would be replaced with a natural gas plant. Today, the cost of natural gas has skyrocketed. Replacing hydropower with a coal plant would add million of tons of carbon dioxide into the air every year.

As in 2002, breaching dams would force more polluting forms of transportation to replace barges that currently transport millions of tons of wheat and grain each year on the Snake River from several states to the Pacific Rim.

For more information about the four dams (Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose and Lower Granite) go to:

<http://www.bpa.gov/corporate/BPANews/Library/images/Dams/>

For a copy of the press release issued on Oct. 6, go to:

http://vocuspr.vocus.com/VocusPR30/Newsroom/Query.aspx?SiteName=Bonneville&Entity=PRAsset&SF_PRAsset_PRAssetID_EQ=39931&XSL=PressRelease&Cache=True