NEWS RELEASE
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Coalition For Idaho Water Urges NPCC To Reject Plea For Studies, Legislation

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The Northwest Power and Conservation Council was urged by the Coalition for Idaho Water today to reject a desperate plea by environmental groups for the Council to support more studies and divisive legislation on dam removal.

The Coalition labeled the legislation as simply a diversionary tactic being pushed by environmental groups. The Coalition is formed from more than 50 different organizations representing Idaho counties, cities, chambers of commerce, industrial, municipal and commercial water users, and agricultural groups.

"These environmental groups are simply throwing grenades at the hard work that is being done in the region through the collaborative process by the States, the tribes and the federal government. These groups increasingly find themselves alone on an island - let's call it "Fantasy Island" - asking for additional studies on dam removal and pushing for this ill-advised legislation in Congress," Coalition representative Norm Semanko told Council members during public testimony today in Boise.

The Coalition official said the radical environmentalist push for the legislation is simply the latest variation in their dam breach agenda and should come as no surprise.

"When the Nez Perce Tribe, the State of Idaho and the Federal government reached agreement on the Snake River Water Rights Settlement Act in 2004, the environmental groups declined Senator Mike Crapo's invitation to come to the table and discuss potential improvements for the fish. Instead they chose to seek more Idaho water by filing litigation that we are defending against today," Semanko added.

The Coalition also told the NPCC representatives the recent "Revenue Stream Report," submitted by environmental groups, was a classic example of "garbage in, garbage out".

"As the Independent Economic Advisory Board told the Council, the report builds on faulty assumptions and conclusions from previous analyses. It is not worth the paper it is printed on." Semanko noted.

Semanko urged the NPCC to not help environmentalists attack what is proving to be a highly collaborative process in working towards meaningful salmon recovery efforts.

"The status conference held in Judge Redden's court in Portland last week made it obvious that the tribes, States and Federal government have all rolled up their sleeves and gone to work in a serious attempt to reach agreement. Meanwhile the environmental plaintiffs stand by on the sidelines declaring that it is a "black box" process and throwing grenades at it," the Coalition official said.

"We do not think more studies on dam removal are warranted. The decision was made in 1999. The fact that the faulty logic of the Revenue Stream Report disagrees with the work that was previously done by the Corps of Engineers and others is no reason to commission another report," Semanko said.

But if the NPCC does feel more study is needed, then the Coalition spokesman urged the Council members to look at the full plate of options and issues, including potential additional water storage to satisfy flow augmentation requirements, despite it being scientifically shown to be a failed experiment.

"Harvest, hatcheries, habitat including ocean conditions and many other factors have to be looked at, not just the hydro system – and the environmentalists' political dream of tearing out the four Lower Snake River dams," Semanko added.

Idaho is the 3rd fastest growing State in the nation for two years running, trailing only Arizona and Nevada. More power, not less is needed now and for the foreseeable future. This urgent need to meet growing demands for electricity must be factored into any request to further study dam removal, he noted.