

Snake River Dams Provide Irreplaceable Benefits

The lower Snake River hydroelectric projects, located in eastern Washington, provide clean, renewable energy, flood control, agriculture, recreation, and trade and job benefits to the Northwest that are simply irreplaceable.

Yet these dams are a flashpoint for environmental activists who continue to lobby and litigate for destroying them. The dam opponents argue it would enhance salmon runs and increase fishing opportunities, and they contend energy from the dams could be replaced with wind power or conservation. Their views are extremely myopic, consider the facts:

- The lower Snake River dams produce about 5 percent of the region's energy annually; that's 1,100 megawatts, enough to power a city the size of Seattle. The dams also provide over 10 percent of the system's capability to meet a spike in demand during a cold snap or other power emergency.
- Aggressive conservation is expected to meet most of the region's load growth in the next 20 years. But the region needs hydropower, too. If the dams were removed, conservation could not make up for the significant loss.
- Wind power can't replace the dams. It is variable and does not have the attributes of hydropower that keep the region's power system reliable.
- In fact, adding wind power in the region would be much more difficult without the lower Snake River dams. They play a key role in backing up variable generation like wind.
- The Northwest Power and Conservation Council concluded that replacing power from the lower Snake River dams would require hundreds of megawatts of fossil-fuel burning resources, probably natural gas, to be built. As a result, annual carbon emissions would increase in the region by 3 million tons, 7.6 percent.
- Carbon emissions would also be added by trucks and rail cars needed to replace the barge and shipping traffic that currently moves on the river.



- Cost of the region's power system would increase by over \$530 million dollars in 2020 and remain higher without the lower Snake River dams. The region's public utilities would see power costs from the Bonneville Power Administration increase on the order of 24 to 29 percent. That translates to a 12 to 15 percent hike in customer bills
- Billions of dollars would also be needed to study and carry out the destruction and to cover the impacts of lost river trade, flood control, and irrigation.
- And perhaps the most compelling reason, good science does not support breaching the lower Snake River dams as a way to recover ESA-listed salmon. Only four of the 13 listed species pass these dams. Fish are surviving in the river at or near the same levels as before these dams were built, and runs are rebounding.

The benefits from these projects outweigh any speculative gains that removing them might provide for salmon. The region has expended billions of dollars to balance the needs of salmon, steelhead, and other fish and wildlife with the operation of dams and reservoirs on the Columbia and Snake rivers. Our efforts are working and show that salmon and dams can coexist.

Northwest RiverPartners is a partnership of farmers, electric utilities, ports, and large and small businesses in the Pacific Northwest. We are dedicated to ensuring the Columbia and Snake remain living, working rivers to benefit families and businesses in the region.

www.nwriverpartners.org

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