

Snake River Dams High on Hydro, Zero on Carbon

The Northwest is rich in hydroelectricity. Our carbon footprint is half that of the rest of the country, in large part because we get so much renewable power from our hydro system.

A recent study by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council highlights the importance of the Snake River dams to keeping our air clean and our electricity costs low. The Council studied their contribution to the region and found that both carbon emissions and electricity costs would increase substantially without them.

Yet anti-dam activist groups continue to take aim at the lower Snake River dams, calling for their removal. Those dams produce enough electricity to power a city the size of Seattle, and they can be counted on in a cold snap or a heat wave to keep the lights on.

The Council found that minus that power, the Northwest would need to build more fossil-fuel burning plants. Emissions from such plants would increase carbon emissions by 3 million tons a year and another 3 million tons of carbon would be added from sources imported from outside the Northwest to make up the difference.

This far outweighs any carbon emission gains to be made as a result of state requirements for new renewable resources, such as wind and solar. (Not to mention that hydro is the Northwest's best resource to "back up" these resources which rely on the wind to blow and the sun to shine to create energy)!

For utilities like [fill in utility name] that get much of their power supply from the Bonneville Power Administration, their wholesale costs could go up between 25 and 30 percent without the Snake River dams. That's a whopping increase by any measure!

We need the power from hydroelectric dams to light the path ahead. They are the key to a greener, brighter future.