

Kara Rowe
Director of Affairs & Outreach
Washington Association of Wheat Growers
Testimony on “Saving Our Federal Dams and New Hydropower Development and
Jobs Act of 2012”
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Chairman Hastings, Ranking Member Markey and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Kara Rowe, and I am the Affairs and Outreach Director for the Washington Association of Wheat Growers. I am an outdoor enthusiast and also a 4th generation farm kid from Creston, Wash., where my family raises soft white winter wheat, dark northern spring wheat and beef cattle.

Our family has personally benefitted from the irrigation, hydropower and infrastructure created by the Columbia Snake River System. On behalf of all American taxpayers, I thank you for looking at this vital system that sustains our nation.

When my great grandfather settled in Eastern Washington in 1887, he longed for an honest, responsible and clean way of life to raise his family. He worked for years in the mines of Anaconda and Butte, Mont., long before the days of OSHA and greenhouse gas emissions. He sewed his life savings into his boots and moved his family east away from the mining camps. He traded mining soot for some of the most fertile soil in the Western Hemisphere. By horse and plow he grew a generation. Today, he would be both proud and amazed at the stewardship practices we as his heirs have developed to grow our crops in the most safe, efficient and environmentally sound ways possible. Our ability to feed our neighbors and the world safely and competitively was only made possible through great progress and great stewardship.

The same can be said for a major component we as Washington farmers rely heavily on: the Columbia River.

Watching the desert bloom

My grandfather, watched as President Roosevelt developed one of the greatest infrastructure designs in American history. As he farmed along the Big Bend plateau west of Spokane, he watched the colossal undertaking of the mighty Grand Coulee Dam. After the Grand Coulee was built, he watched the desert south of our home bloom. The irrigation canals of Roosevelt’s Columbia Basin Project (CBP) allowed for progress, and it gave hope to the helpless. It still does. The CBP is vital not only to the farmers of Washington, but to every American. According to the federal Bureau of Reclamation the yearly value of the irrigated crops within the CBP is \$630 million. The food grown in this area includes everything from potatoes and apples to wheat and barley.

Without the supplemental irrigation provided by the CBP, this area would again become desert. Tens of thousands of people would lose their way of life. Vibrant towns would

become as dry as the dirt below them. Pressure on other areas to replace the agricultural value of the Basin will increase emissions and the carbon footprint. Arable land that can produce the same amount of food on so few acres so efficiently simply does not exist. The efficiencies and technology in irrigation now available to farmers allows them to grow their crops using water more effectively.

While our family does not irrigate, we do have pasture and natural habitat that relies on healthy underground aquifer levels to provide water to our homes and herd. The current and future canal system of the CBP provides irrigation water to many farmers who may otherwise use deep well irrigation. Deep wells pull their water from the same aquifer that supplies our lakes, towns and homes with water. Without the canal system irrigation, deep well irrigation would deplete our aquifer at a drastically increased rate. With a vibrant canal system using a portion of the renewable river resource, deep well irrigation and aquifer depletion can be kept to a minimum.

In fact, as an industry, the Washington wheat growers support continuing development of the Columbia Basin Project in order to minimize groundwater declines within the Odessa Groundwater Management Subarea.

Saving lives and saving export vitality

The infrastructure provided by the Columbia Snake River System keeps American agriculture competitive, but it also saves lives. The Columbia Snake River System is the largest U.S. wheat and barley export gateway in the country, and the third largest in the world. Half of the wheat exported from the system moves by barge. Barging along the 365--mile inland waterway is the cleanest and most fuel efficient mode of transportation - four times better than trucking. Breaching dams would end barge navigation, and put up to 700,000 more trucks on the highways and increase greenhouse gas emissions. The cargo capacity of one barge alone on the river is equal to 134 large semi trucks. That's a lot of big rigs and tires running on the highway. Having the choice to barge our grain and other commodities simply keeps our highways safer.

Barging is also cheaper. Shipping farm products with the river system uses 40 percent less fuel per ton-mile than a rail system.

Without barging along the Columbia Snake River system, our American agricultural system would suffer consequences affecting every American citizen. Trade would be slowed and economic impacts would be felt beyond our country's heartland. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are tied directly to the river system's activity, trade and commerce.

More than \$900 million has been spent on new investment in the Pacific Northwest because of the safe, clean and effective transportation system provided by the rivers. A new \$200 million grain terminal just opened in Longview, Wash., allowing the Pacific Northwest to increase its global competitiveness. American wheat farmers are known for growing the highest quality grain in the world. The fact that our customers are investing in terminals within the Pacific Northwest is not only good for the farmers, it's

good for the nation. A thriving agricultural sector will lead our nation out of its recession. Safe, sound and efficient infrastructure allows us to be the best in the world.

Hydropower is more than a renewable resource

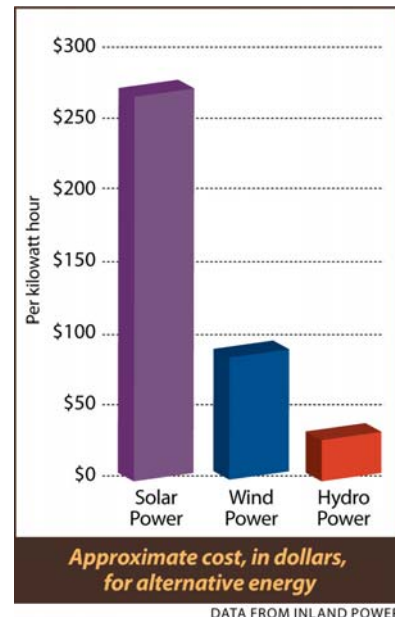
During the bone-chilling winters in Eastern Washington, I grew up knowing that at least two or three days of the year our family homestead would be without power. We always had spare water jugs in the basement and the wood stove was ready to replace our electric furnace. I know the hardships of living without power only on the superficial surface. This summer, millions of people in the East Coast suffered multiple days without power during one of the worst heat waves in years. Even California has dealt with more “brown outs” than they care to handle in recent years. Imagine if we lost 40 percent of our nation’s cleanest energy supply?

Hydropower is inexpensive, sustainable and renewable. The power generated by the powerhouses on the lower Snake River generate enough power to supply a city the size of Seattle.

Hydropower turbines convert 90 percent of available energy into electricity. This is more efficient than any other form of generation.

Comparatively, wind has about 30 percent efficiency. Those hydro kilowatts are created in the cleanest way possible and all of that power, if taken off line, would have to be created in another way. The alternative options are coal-fired, gas-fired or nuclear.

The hydropower on our rivers is not only the cleanest energy source, it’s also the cheapest. According to Inland Power and Light, a local Washington electric utility that serves Eastern Washington, wind generation costs anywhere from \$89 to \$129 per kilowatt hour. This isn’t cost effective compared to hydro, which costs Inland Power \$30 per megawatt hour (solar currently costs \$280 per megawatt hour). Hydropower is the cleanest and cheapest form of power generation that exists.



Final thoughts

My father taught me and my siblings at an early age that we, as farmers, are the true environmentalists. Taking care of our land is vital to our heritage and success. If we don’t take care of our dirt, we will have nothing to pass along to our children and grandchildren. We, in Washington, feel the same about our water and natural resources. I grew up recreating in Lake Roosevelt and look forward to passing that tradition on to my child. As an outdoor enthusiast, I am thrilled that NOAA Fisheries has determined fish survival through the river system is higher today than it was before the Snake River dams were built. In fact, all the dams have highly effective juvenile

passage systems. The increasing salmon numbers in our rivers illustrate that the targeted efforts of concerned individual landowners, Tribes, federal agencies, state governments and businesses are working to produce the improvements needed.

It is incomprehensible to suggest elimination of infrastructure already in place. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has documented the devastating impact on agriculture, power, regional communities, and even the uncertainty to fish populations if the dams were breached.

The Washington wheat growers supports an Endangered Species Act baseline that includes dams.

I appreciate the opportunity to address you today, and look forward to working with you in the future.