

Testimony of Dale Alldredge  
President  
Port of Lewiston Commission

Thank you for inviting me to testify today on this important matter.

My name is Dale Alldredge.

I am proud to serve as the President of the three-member Port of Lewiston Commission, elected by the citizens of our Port District.

The voters of Nez Perce County established the Port of Lewiston in 1958 with a resounding 80% approving the development of Idaho's only seaport. The mission of the Port is to create living wage jobs by facilitating trade and economic development for the benefit of the citizens of Idaho.

We worked for 20 years to bring navigation to Lewiston, and the State of Idaho and our nation have benefited ever since.

The Port of Lewiston serves a wide range of Idaho farmers, food processors and forest products manufacturers, including wheat growers in Grangeville, pea and lentil producers in Moscow, and the 2,000 employees of Potlatch Corporation, manufacturing paper products just a mile up the road in Lewiston.

We are just one of the 25 public port districts on the Columbia Snake River navigation system.

- This system is the number one export gateway in the United States for wheat, number one in the nation for barley exports, and number one on the West Coast for forest products and paper products exports.
- In all, about 12 million tons of cargo move each year on this system, valued at \$1.5 - 2 billion annually.
- According to a recent economic impact study, maritime commerce along the Columbia-Snake River system is estimated to sustain 40,000 family wage jobs.

Everyone knows that barging is the lowest cost, least polluting form of transportation.

- According to the US Maritime Administration, one gallon of fuel moves each ton of cargo 514 miles by barge compared to 202 miles by rail and only 59 miles by truck.
- The air pollution comparison yields similar results, with barging being far cleaner for the environment than rail or trucking.
- A typical grain ship departing the Columbia River to foreign markets carries 60,000 tons of wheat.
- To move that amount of grain from Lewiston to Portland or Vancouver takes 4 1/2 barge tows.
- But it would take six 100-car unit trains or a total of 2,400 semi-trucks to move the same amount of grain.
- Annually, barging keeps 700,000 trucks off the interstate, helping to protect the sensitive airshed of the Columbia River Gorge.

The Idaho economy is stronger and more stable because of our ability to provide the lowest cost, and cleanest form of transportation for Idaho products to reach international markets.

And our national economy is stronger, because the Columbia Snake River navigation system provides economic benefits to the other states we serve across the northern tier of the country, including Washington, Montana, Wyoming, and the Dakotas'.

The producers in these states rely on our Columbia Snake River navigation system to reach highly competitive foreign markets.

All of these benefits depend on the maintenance of the multiple-purpose federal projects on the Columbia Snake River System.

Which brings us to why we are here today.

Some groups are using the Endangered Species Act as a vehicle to call for the removal of the Snake River dams, or drawing down reservoirs far below their engineered design range.

Either option would end navigation and eliminate or significantly reduce hydropower production.

Studies by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council, a Corps of Engineers System Operation Review, a federal agency Environmental Impact Study (EIS), three independent Salmon Recovery Teams, and three biological opinions have all rejected dam breaching.

But dam breaching and drawdown continues to remain on the table.

In fact, the U.S. District Court in Oregon will hear oral arguments this coming Friday, June 10th, from plaintiffs who are seeking a preliminary injunction to change river operations and draw down the Lower Granite Reservoir to 10 feet BELOW the design range of the dam and reservoir.

That is the river that you see just outside the window of this hotel. And that river is the lifeblood of the regions economy. 90% of the agricultural production (wheat and pulses) grown within our region is exported.

If advocates of dam breaching are successful, the Ports of Lewiston, Clarkston and Whitman County will cease to operate for maritime cargo.

Locally, this will mean the loss of over 1600 jobs and \$36 million in earnings in this Valley.

We will lose millions of tons of cargo, hundreds of millions of dollars of commerce and the opportunity to move products to market from Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, and the Dakotas' at rates that allow us to compete with foreign producers.

And navigation means more to this region than just moving cargo.

Each year on the Lower Granite Pool, more than 15,000 tourists visit our area on cruise boats that rely on the locks, dams and reservoirs.

- These boats bring much needed economic activity to our region.

Dam breach advocates claim that fish are going extinct.

- But the fact is there are more fish in the river than at any time since the first dam was built at Bonneville in 1938.
- The four highest years of fish returning to the river are the last four years.

o From 2000 to 2003, returns of Snake River Steelhead are up 57%; Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook are up 91% and Snake River Fall Chinook are up 217%.

- This year's early returns are off from last year. Fish biologist's can not explain why but, that doesn't seem to slow down the claims that dams are to blame.

Dam breach advocates claim that the dams are killing all the fish.

- In fact, according to NOAA Fisheries, survival through the river system is higher today than it was before the Snake River dams were built.

Dam breach advocates claim that taking out the Snake River dams is the only way to save the salmon.

- What they don't say is that there are 26 runs of fish listed as threatened or endangered from Northern California to the Canadian border ... and only four of those listed runs pass these Snake River dams.

- Changing ocean conditions has been cited as one of the principle reasons for recent record salmon runs. Salmon spend approx. 10% of their life in-river and 90% in the ocean. It is simply not credible to claim that breaching dams is the only answer for salmon.

Dam breach advocates claim that we can simply shift cargo from barge to truck or rail.

- That is not true ... the costs are significantly higher.
- Few containers of high value commodities could afford the higher rates.
- However, the vast majority of our cargo is grain.
- Farmers can't get truck drivers to meet their needs today, and aren't likely to find enough drivers for an additional 700,000 two-day trips to Portland or Vancouver.
- And if they could, the farmers couldn't afford them.
- The price for grain is set on the world market.
- The farmers can't simply increase their price to cover the increased cost.
- This additional cost of doing business would come directly out of the pockets of farmers, and would likely result in the departure of many families from farming.

Rail is no better as an alternative.

- Railroads have a poor history of offering reliable service to our grain shippers.
- Cars are often not available when needed, they are not delivered on time, and fewer cars are delivered than ordered.
- Lack of reliable service would cause our grain shippers to default on the delivery terms of their sales contracts.

We believe that a multipurpose river system and healthy fish runs are not mutually exclusive.

In 2002, the Corps of Engineers completed the Lower Snake River EIS, a 5-year, \$25 million study. The Corps EIS concluded that we can have healthy fish runs and a multi-purpose river system. Record fish runs over the past four years, verify the Corps findings.

Chairman Radanovich, we are seeking your support and the support of your committee to ensure that fish runs and family wage jobs are both available for future generations.

ESA reform is necessary to balance conflicting federal restrictions. For example, it is difficult to restore endangered fish runs when sea lions and terns are consuming Snake River salmon by the thousands. However, federal restrictions prevent government agencies from even trying to relocate terns and seals.

By making reasonable reforms to ESA, we are confident that we can have harvestable fish runs on the Snake and Columbia Rivers while maintaining infrastructure, and the tremendous economic benefits of the multiple-purpose river system.