

Mr. Curt Koegen
Business Manager
International Union of Operating Engineers Local 370

Testimony
Before the Committee on Resources
United States House of Representatives

Hearing on Keeping the Columbia/Snake a Working River System
June 6, 2005

Thank you for allowing me to take part in this hearing.

I am opposed to breaching the dams on the Snake River for many important reasons. Although breaching the dams would generate temporary work for construction workers, I believe that to do so would be economically devastating to not only the Lewiston/Clarkston area but also to the Pacific Northwest as a whole.

Maintenance dredging on the Columbia/Snake River system employed approximately 30 to 50 Operating Engineers yearly until the dredging was stopped. Besides the jobs created by the dredging, all of the dams have maintenance personnel, each Port District employs workers to handle the commodities that are barged down river. These are family wage jobs with benefits. I believe that if the dams were breached most of these jobs would be lost or replaced with minimum wage jobs.

Barging is a very efficient method of moving commodities to the coast. One barge can handle as much grain as 134 semi-trucks and a tow as much as 538 trucks (see attachment A). Fuel and emissions are considerable less per ton-mile compared to trucks or rail. Our regions infrastructure will not safely handle the increase in truck traffic. We currently do not have the financial resources to fix the roads we have, let alone the fund the major reconstruction that would be needed for the increased truck traffic.

The dams on the Columbia/Snake river system supply approximately 60% of the electricity for the region. How is this pollution free energy going to be replaced and at what cost to the consumers and businesses that rely on this power? How long will business stay in our region if their power costs skyrocket?

As I stated earlier, the breaching of the dams would be great work for the Operating Engineers, and in my opinion, it would be great work to rebuild the dams when it was realized that breaching them was a mistake.

Thank you.

Curt Koegen
Business Manager
I.U.O.E. Local 370