

IN THE SENATE

SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL NO. 103

BY STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

A JOINT MEMORIAL

1
2 TO THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE UNITED STATES IN CON-
3 GRESS ASSEMBLED AND TO THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION REPRESENTING THE
4 STATES OF IDAHO, MONTANA, WASHINGTON, AND OREGON IN THE CONGRESS OF THE
5 UNITED STATES.

6 We, your Memorialists, the Senate and the House of Representatives of
7 the State of Idaho assembled in the First Regular Session of the Sixty-sixth
8 Idaho Legislature, do hereby respectfully represent that:

9 WHEREAS, the Idaho Legislature recognizes the Columbia-Snake River
10 System as part of the United States Marine Highway network; and

11 WHEREAS, the Columbia-Snake River System and its tributaries, collec-
12 tively and in its entirety, are a multiuse system providing navigation,
13 transportation, fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, hydropower gener-
14 ation, flood control, and irrigation to the citizens and industry of the
15 Pacific Northwest; and

16 WHEREAS, the Columbia-Snake River System and its tributaries provide a
17 vital contribution to the well-being of the State of Idaho and to the qual-
18 ity of life of its citizens, being among the most operationally important and
19 cost-effective projects in the Federal Columbia River Power System; and

20 WHEREAS, a balanced river system produces economic benefits like jobs,
21 trade, and renewable electricity while caring for environmental values
22 through good management practices and reinvestment in our natural re-
23 sources; and

24 WHEREAS, no amount of money can replace the lifestyle and economies
25 of the communities that depend upon the Columbia-Snake River System's hy-
26 dropower, navigation, irrigation, flood risk management, recreation, and
27 municipal and industrial water supply benefits; and

28 WHEREAS, the State of Idaho reasserts and confirms sovereign control
29 over all water resources within the state; and

30 WHEREAS, the decline of anadromous fish is due to many factors, includ-
31 ing increased predation, unfavorable ocean conditions, and harvest levels;
32 and

33 WHEREAS, breaching the four lower Snake River dams is an idealistic,
34 single variable model to Pacific salmon recovery that flies in the face of
35 reality for salmon, is illogical from an environmental perspective, hurts
36 industry and communities, puts politics over science and local jobs, and may
37 neither restore Idaho salmon nor prevent their extinction; and

38 WHEREAS, only four of the thirteen Endangered Species Act-listed salmon
39 runs swim past the lower Snake River dams, and they do so with over 95% sur-
40 vival at each of the dams; and

41 WHEREAS, breaching the four lower Snake River dams would be a drastic
42 measure that would forever alter our way of life in the Pacific Northwest;
43 and

1 WHEREAS, breaching the lower Snake River dams is an outdated argument
2 that is not supported by current dam passage survival studies of juvenile Pa-
3 cific salmon; and

4 WHEREAS, in 2008, 2014, and 2020 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
5 Administration produced biological opinions that stated breaching the four
6 lower Snake River dams was not necessary action for salmon recovery; and

7 WHEREAS, the governor of Idaho commissioned the Governor's Salmon Work-
8 group, a diverse group of stakeholders that worked for 18 months to study the
9 issue of salmon recovery, representing for the first time broad interests
10 working collaboratively to help shape the state's salmon and steelhead pol-
11 icy; and

12 WHEREAS, that workgroup developed many practical recommendations to
13 address the issue of improved river systems and habitat conditions for
14 healthy salmon populations, specifically excluding any recommendations for
15 removing dams; and

16 WHEREAS, due to the efforts of the state, the Nez Perce Tribe, and Idaho
17 water users in entering into the 2004 Snake River Water Rights Agreement,
18 up to 487,000 acre-feet of Idaho's water is used for flow augmentation for
19 salmon and steelhead in the lower Snake and Columbia rivers, with water be-
20 ing released through willing-buyer, willing-seller arrangements. In return
21 for flow augmentation, the 2004 agreement provides protections to Idaho wa-
22 ter users in the form of a 30-year biological opinion; and

23 WHEREAS, agricultural and industrial applications of water have a legal
24 priority within the state; and

25 WHEREAS, the Port of Lewiston, Idaho's only seaport, is part of the col-
26 lective Columbia-Snake River System and is an asset to the State of Idaho and
27 an asset to the Inland Northwest region, providing global competitiveness
28 and connectivity for regional products, economic development investment,
29 and multimodal transportation; and

30 WHEREAS, the State of Idaho supports the Port of Lewiston activities and
31 believes that reservoir drawdowns or removal of the dams on the lower Snake
32 and Columbia rivers would inflict on the citizenry a loss of recreation, an
33 increase in electric rates, a loss of navigation, a risk of floods, economic
34 hardship, and an impaired quality of life; and

35 WHEREAS, cruise boat traffic to the Port of Lewiston has steadily in-
36 creased over the last 10 years and is projected to increase from 19,000 pas-
37 sengers in 2019 to over 33,000 passengers in 2022, a growth of 76%, bringing
38 much financial growth to the entire Snake River area; and

39 WHEREAS, the Columbia-Snake River System acts as a top wheat export
40 gateway in the United States, with approximately 10% of all United States
41 wheat exports barged through the four dams on the Snake River and about 50% of
42 all Idaho-grown wheat barged from Lewiston to Portland and then onto export
43 markets around the world; and

44 WHEREAS, barging on the Columbia and Snake rivers is the safest, most
45 fuel-efficient means of transporting cargoes in the Northwest, being 40%
46 more fuel-efficient than freight trains and 270% more fuel-efficient than
47 semitrucks; and

48 WHEREAS, without the ability to barge goods down the river, diesel fuel
49 consumption would increase by nearly 5 million gallons per year as barges
50 would be replaced by less efficient truck-to-rail shipments, resulting in

1 increases in carbon dioxide and other harmful emissions by over 1.2 million
2 tons per year; and

3 WHEREAS, the Columbia-Snake River System is also highly valued on the
4 west coast for forest product exports and mineral exports, is second in the
5 nation for soy exports, and is a major gateway for auto imports and exports.
6 Each year, around 250,000 tons of wood chips are barged from the Lower Gran-
7 ite Pool to be turned into pulp for paper production at mills on the lower Co-
8 lumbia River; and

9 WHEREAS, hydroelectric power is one of the best energy sources we
10 have, with clean, reliable, renewable baseload generation that is more
11 valuable than ever as the four lower Snake River dams produce thousands of
12 megawatts of low-cost, affordable electricity, which is renewable energy
13 that provides power to 22 rural Idaho utilities serving tens of thousands of
14 Idahoans, numerous Idaho cities, farmers, and industries, while acting as a
15 battery to integrate other intermittent renewable energy resources on the
16 system; and

17 WHEREAS, the Idaho Legislature believes that any actions to degrade
18 the functionality, in whole or in part, or to remove or breach dams on the
19 Columbia-Snake River System or its tributaries, or to take water from the
20 state for anadromous fish enhancement efforts would inflict on the citizenry
21 of the state a loss in economic and trade opportunities, a loss of recharge
22 waters for the state's aquifers, a loss of navigation and transportation,
23 an increased risk of floods, an increase in electrical rates, a shortfall
24 in power generation, a loss of recreational opportunities, and a threatened
25 quality of life for Idaho citizens.

26 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the members of the First Regular Ses-
27 sion of the Sixty-sixth Idaho Legislature, the Senate and the House of Rep-
28 resentatives concurring therein, that Idaho opposes the removal or breach-
29 ing of the dams on the Columbia-Snake River System and its tributaries, has
30 sovereignty of its water resources, prohibits contributions of water from
31 Idaho's reservoirs for flow augmentation except those expressly authorized
32 by state law, contends that efforts for further recovery of anadromous fish
33 must be based on sound science, and supports maintenance and multiple-use
34 benefits of the Columbia-Snake River System. Additionally, the Idaho Leg-
35 islature recognizes and supports the international competitiveness, mul-
36 timodal transportation, and economic development benefits provided by the
37 Port of Lewiston.

38 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate be, and she is
39 hereby authorized and directed to forward a copy of this Memorial to the
40 President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of
41 Congress and to the congressional delegations representing the states of
42 Idaho, Montana, Washington, and Oregon in the Congress of the United States.