

**Comments for Idaho Governor's Salmon Workgroup
October 5th, 2020**

Having attended several hours of the working groups sessions, I feel motivated to further my concerns. Concerns which happen to be fish-centric, for as methods and policies precipitating the runs back to historic levels offers very considerable and I might add peer reviewed, economic and legal precedent that the public has been harmed by salmon decline and that communities will benefit with their return. However, with the continued and rapid decline of populations/runs and after decades with billions of taxpayer dollars spent their extinction seems imminent. Current technologies have advanced our methods to generate energy and efficiently distribute it and thus run economies across the region. With the construction of the four Lower Snake R. dams the future of those communities was locked in on what is now 19th and early 20th century technology.

I am pleased with the leadership of Governor Little and this group's commitment to recover Idaho's proud salmon heritage, however I am convinced that the end point for recovery can only be a moon shot level plan to remove the 4LSRD's. Breaching would not only create skilled level jobs it would create new economies grown around removal, such as recreation, resource management, manufacturing of renewable energy equipment, smart grid technologies and as yet realized economies. Lest we not forget a healthy food resource and pride in having accomplished a massive benefit to people and the environment.

Thank you for taking my concerns into consideration, I look forward to further correspondence in the coming months and years.

Best Regards,
Rich Rusnak
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To Whom It May Concern,

I am neither for or against the removal of dams on the Snake River system to improve the mortality of salmon/steelhead populations. I am for an in depth analysis of the issues facing these fish populations. I have listened to proponents of dam removal and asked for a quantitative break down of the population losses from specific source points to include streams, dams, predators (seals), commercial fishing, recreational fishing, and ocean demographics but have not obtained a straight forward answer, only "it's the dams" response. I have fished for years in Alaska on the Situk River for sockeye. There are no dams there, but there are also significant reductions in sockeye populations, as a year ago, the season on this river was completely shut down for recreational fishermen. There also used to be thousands of Kings, only hundreds now. What has changed, you ask this question of the experts and the only reply you get is "the dams on the Snake River system". The Sacramento River is another example. Some of the best salmonoid fishing in Idaho was in the early 2000's, totally ignored by the "experts". Why the dramatic drop, I know, the dams that were built 50 + years ago (not). We need to do a study to determine the vital factors that account for a large part of the outcomes regarding fish

mortality. A common approach used in business is the use of a Pareto analysis to graphically and quantitatively show the key issues/locations that are causing the majority of the issues and focus on working on those. I believe that commercial ocean fishing is a major culprit but ask the experts and again "it's the dams" response. I would gladly support the outcomes of this type of analysis as I would know that it acknowledges and addresses all the issues and tackles the critical ones.

Thanks,
Chad Eberhard

I am a former river guide, son of a fishing raft business-owning father, and proud Idahoan. I am concerned that this Governor's Salmon Workgroup is not addressing the plight of Idaho's dwindling salmon and steelhead runs with sufficient urgency or scope.

I provide three mental pictures that bring to light my thinking:

- In John Rember's book, "Traplins," he describes growing up in Stanley, Idaho, in the 1940s and 50s. One of those childhood memories that he repeats in great detail is the inability to sleep at night during fall because salmon and steelhead arrived in such great numbers that their tails slapping in the Salmon River kept residents up at night. During the public comment Zoom call last night (9/29/20), a man named Bill Bellknap spoke of these prolific salmon runs occurring in the Stanley basin. He also spoke of the stench arising from the spawning salmon and the surge of fishermen and fisherwomen that would come to the Sawtooth Valley during the fall each year.

- There is archeological evidence of Native Americans coming to fish at Dagger Falls on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River for thousands of years. As a former guide on the Middle Fork who obtained an Environmental Studies degree at the College of Idaho, I can personally attest to the significance of that watershed in our attempt at bringing back Idaho's salmon and steelhead runs to sustainable numbers. As Russ Thurow would say, the Middle Fork of the Salmon River is a hotel with large, beaming "Vacant" sign that is perfectly ready to accept salmon of the magnitude in numbers that it hosted pre-dam construction on the Columbia and Lower Snake Rivers.

- I recently came across a photo of Lewiston, Idaho on a summer day in 1964. It looks nothing like Lewiston today. In the photo, the entire street is filled with cars and people are flocking to stores along the sidewalks. The photo was taken before the four lower Snake River dams were all built. If the four Lower Snake River dams are so vital to the region, why are people not flocking to Lewiston like they were in that era? It is possible to restore that Lewiston region to its former glory and also save the fish.

I implore you to consider the fact that without bold decision making that takes the necessary steps to save Idaho's salmon and steelhead now, entire fishing-dependent economies and histories in places across Idaho will be lost forever.

Conner Jackson
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I am a 22 year old graduate student that has grown up my entire life in Idaho and felt extremely lucky to live in a place with the outdoor opportunities that I have had. I was born wearing fishing waders and a gun in my hand and want to continue to be able to participate in and advocate for participating in these outdoor activities for the rest of my life.

We have been fortunate to inherit an incredible landscape and have a duty, as Idahoans, to conserve that landscape and the species that live on it. Salmon and Steelhead play an integral role in that conservation effort. They are critical to maintaining a healthy landscape, as well as acting as indicator species for water quality and aquatic habitat conditions. We should be doing everything that we can to protect these species.

I am worried that I will not get the opportunity to go steelhead fishing in the state of Idaho in the future, as our lack of bold and aggressive action to protect these fish are dooming them to extinction. We continue to preserve the status quo that has led to the drastic decline in fish numbers over the last 40 years and this cannot be allowed to continue. The results are plain to see; continuing the policies of the last 30 years will not restore fish runs to Idaho.

Some people may be okay with these choices, but as a person who plans to live out the rest of my life in this state, I am not. The science on this issue is clear about what will preserve the fish: the Snake River dams must come down. We have spent too much time and too much money trying to work around the dams with no meaningful results. We have an incredible opportunity to protect salmon and steelhead in Idaho, but we cannot do that without breaching the dams.

I am asking for you to consider policy recommendations that would breach the Snake River dams and provide the best opportunity to recover Salmon and Steelhead populations in Idaho.

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I am writing to urge you to explore the possibility of breaching the four Lower Snake River dams to restore Idaho salmon runs. I have lived in Idaho my entire life and what makes me stay is the fact that this is one of the few states left where wild places and wild creatures exist in abundance. This includes salmon and steelhead. However, with the present threat to salmon populations in the state, Idaho's wilderness reputation is under threat. In my lifetime I have never seen abundant salmon runs in this state, despite all the fixes that fish and wildlife agencies have implemented over the years. As a hunter, angler, and an Idahoan, one of my dreams is to see salmon return in abundance to this state, and I am extremely disappointed in the results of what is one of the largest species recovery efforts in history. Even with all the money that has been thrown at this problem, salmon numbers remain dismally low with some populations on the verge of extinction. It is clear that previous recovery efforts have not been enough and that something needs to change.

I encourage this workgroup to explore the possibility of breaching the four Lower Snake River dams. These are the primary barriers inhibiting salmon from returning to Idaho, and they are one of the few factors that has remained constant throughout the long, frustrating history of salmon recovery. Scientific research conducted and presented by organizations such as Trout Unlimited and that was presented in the latest EIS has also shown that these four dams are the primary cause of declining salmon populations. I understand that removing these dams would impede certain elements of the economy in northern Idaho and eastern Washington, but the fact of the matter is that people can adapt while the salmon can't. It will be important to work with those industries impacted by dam removal to make sure they continue to thrive even after breaching. While these changes may be difficult and costly, it is unlikely they would be as expensive as previous salmon recovery efforts and we would actually see a return on our investment as salmon numbers would increase. The removal of the four Snake River dams is necessary in order for the recovery of salmon in the great state of Idaho. I urge you to consider and explore this possibility to the fullest.

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