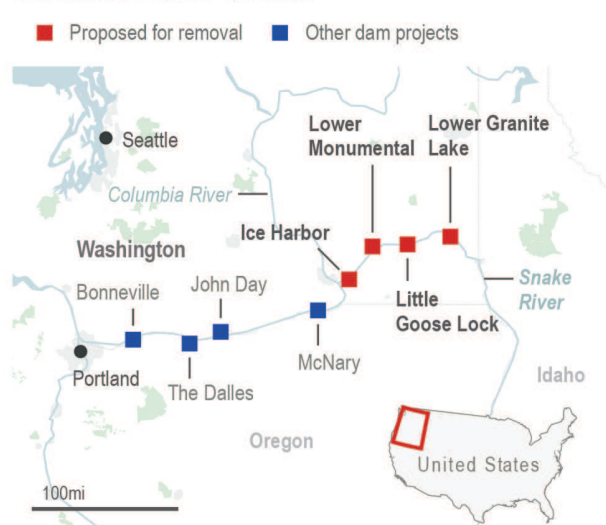


## Washington dams proposed for removal to save salmon population

A trio of federal agencies is due to publish a report that should outline whether four key dams can coexist with a dwindling Northwest salmon population.

Columbia River System Operations



Source: Columbia River System Operations / Graphic: Dien Magno

## DAMS

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for a solution that revives salmon populations, the draft plan is built on the same failed approach the courts have rejected time and again," said Todd True, an attorney for Earthjustice who has represented environmentalists and fishing groups in ongoing litigation over the dams.

"We need a different approach and leadership from elected officials."

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has voiced support for demolishing the Snake River dams.

The 14 federal dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers together produce 40% of the region's power — enough electricity to power nearly 5 million homes, or eight cities roughly the size of Seattle. They also contain a system of locks that allows cities nearly 500 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean access to Asian markets via barges that float down the massive rivers to the sea. Roughly

50 million to 60 million tons of cargo navigate the Snake and Columbia river system each year.

Yet, the towering dams have proven disastrous for salmon that struggle to navigate past them on human-made fish ladders as they swim upstream to spawn and die after spending most of their lives in the Pacific Ocean. Salmon are unique in that they hatch in freshwater streams, and then make their way hundreds of miles to the ocean, where they spend years before finding their way back to their natal streams to mate, lay eggs and die.

Snake River sockeye were the first species in the Columbia River Basin listed under the Endangered Species Act in 1991. Now, 13 salmon runs are listed as federally endangered or threatened.

The Columbia River System dams cut off more than half of salmon spawning and rearing habitat, and many wild salmon runs in the region have 2% or less of their historic populations, said Meg Townsend, an attorney for the Cen-

ter for Biological Diversity.

"The science shows that pulling out the four lower Snake River dams is the only way to save Columbia river salmon," she said.

Townsend and other scientists also warn that Southern Resident orcas are starving to death because of a dearth of the Chinook salmon that are their primary food source.

The Puget Sound population of orcas — also called killer whales — was placed on the endangered species list in 2005. A mother orca that carried her dead baby on her back for 17 days brought international attention in 2018 as their numbers have dwindled to 72 animals.

The U.S. government has spent between \$15 billion and \$17 billion on improved salmon passage over years, but nothing has changed for the salmon, True said. Yet the Pacific Northwest's power supply and ability to use energy more efficiently have vastly improved in the past 20 years, he said.

## STANCE

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"This will not reduce carbon, and only raise taxes," Hansell said. "It does not make sense."

Why the Democrats won't budge, Smith said, is a head scratcher.

"I think those who are in the majority believe that it is their responsibility to handle this. They believe they have the staff and technical assistance to handle this," he said.

But if the proposal is so good for Oregon, the pair of legislators said, Democrats should have the confidence Oregon voters will deliver. The voting math tends to favor the Democrats, with almost 974,000 registered voters, according to the January registration data from the Oregon Secretary of State, a

bump from December 2019 of nearly 3,500.

Republicans are verging on 702,000 voters in Oregon, but they dropped 92 voters from December 2019. Nonaffiliated voters remain the second largest registration block with a little more than 960,000, an increase of more than 4,200 from the end of 2019.

If voters were to approve cap and trade, Smith and Hansell said the Democrats come out looking good.

But, they contended, Democrats also would look good if they refer the measure to the public and it fails. In that outcome, Democrats could at least say the will of the people prevailed and democracy in Oregon is strong.

Democrats in the Oregon House moved Thursday to force Republicans back to the Capitol, issuing subpoenas

to 21 state representatives that would compel them to explain their disappearing act from Salem.

House Speaker Tina Kotek, D-Portland, said process server has been hired to chase down wayward Republicans, although they may be out of state. If they obeyed, the representatives would have to appear before the Democratic-controlled House Rules Committee on Thursday, March 5.

"Be prepared to testify about your unexcused absences during the 2020 regular session of the Legislative Assembly, the need for members to fulfill their oaths of office and constitutional duties," the subpoena states.

The move showed that Kotek is determined to stand against Republican demands to kill the greenhouse gas

legislation or send it to Oregon voters.

The absence of Republicans in the House and Senate has largely stopped action on legislation this week because there is no quorum. The House needs at least one more Republican to show up to advance legislation on the floor and the Senate needs two.

"We feel like this is within our legal right to ask our colleagues to come back and explain before a committee why they believe it's OK for them to not do their job," Kotek told reporters late Thursday.

Legislative committees, minus Republican members, have continued working on bills and policy discussions. But it's unclear if their legislative work will result in new laws.

Smith said the bills com-

ing out of House committees are stacking up. Were Republicans to return, Smith said their first motion should be to kick those bills back to committee for review.

"It would be extremely incompetent of me to vote on those bills without reviewing them," Smith said. "We need to make sure what is in the legislation."

The House also would need to prioritize the bills, he said, starting with the budget and policies related to the budget.

To date, just three bills have passed both chambers and been sent to Gov. Kate Brown to sign into law.

Both chambers, in a formality, convened for less than 15 minutes Wednesday and adjourned.

"I wish the Republicans would understand the im-

portance of their being here," Senate President Peter Courtney told the Senate.

Courtney listed multiple bills passed by the House with bipartisan support that the Senate could be considering — if only Republicans would show up.

One bill is aimed at honoring deceased veterans. Another would protect water rights in Southern Oregon. Others would reform the state's public defense system, boost affordable housing in Pendleton, address school bullying, require building standards in tsunami zones and make insulin more affordable.

"So wherever you are out there, will you please come back?" pleaded Courtney.

— Oregon Capital Bureau reporter Claire Withycombe contributed to this report.

## SPURGEON

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the John Maxwell Company, which provides leadership training.

"She had a lot of determination," said Aldrich, who serves on the Weston City Council. "She had a real heart for other people. She was a good mediator. She was good at taking two heated-up parties and calming them down."

"She was fiercely possessive about Weston," McIntyre said. "She was our rock."

Umatilla County Commissioner and former Athena Mayor John Shafer remembered Spurgeon as intelligent and energetic. As friends and leaders of nearby towns, their paths often converged.

"We were mayors together and bounced ideas off each other," Shafer said. "She was my campaign man-

ager when I ran for commissioner."

He said Spurgeon was passionate and driven, but her fun-loving side emerged often.

"She had a quirky sense of humor," he said, laughing. "She was a 'Weird Al' Yankovic fan."

Spurgeon grew up in Elgin, and her father, Steve McClure, served as a Union County commissioner. Evelyn Spikes of Elgin recalled Spurgeon as one of her English students in her sophomore and senior years at Elgin High School.

"I had so many outstanding students, but Jennifer was extremely smart, an athlete, and obviously she was taller than everybody else," Spikes said.

Spurgeon stood out at 6-foot-4 inches tall, played volleyball and basketball in high school and graduated in 1990. She went on to Whitman College, where she stud-

ied history and played basketball, making 52.7% of her field goal attempts and holding records for most rebounds (902) and blocked shots (95) in a season. She was inducted into Whitman's Hall of Fame in 2008.

In a YouTube video from last June, Spurgeon said she and Dave have a huge collection of movies on DVD "since internet services are kind of weak." Sporting a "Deadpool" T-shirt, she talked to friend Eric Reid remotely from her bed, telling Reid that she and her husband often quote lines from movies "to see who gets the most obscure movie references."

During that interview, she also talked frankly about the brutal realities of cancer.

"The chemo is killing cancer cells just a little faster than it's killing you. It is a race to see which comes

first," she said. "You've got to stay positive about it. If you can't keep a sense of humor in this, then pretty much all is lost."

Connie Carter said she and Spurgeon grew up together and knew each other in high school. They went their separate ways after graduation but eventually reconnected when they both moved to Union.

"Then I moved to Elgin and she and her husband lived in Weston," Carter said. "That wasn't too far apart, so we continued our friendship. We spent time together, and we laughed. She was incredibly witty and intelligent. She loved sarcasm, yet she had a heart of gold and was very insightful to struggles of life. She was just a wonderful friend."

Connie and her husband, Glen Carter, organized a pie auction

benefit for Jennifer on Nov. 23, 2019, in Elgin, to help offset the costs of her cancer treatments. The event raised more than \$6,500. With other contributions, the entire fundraising effort totaled almost \$11,000.

"Jennifer had such a large and diverse following of friends," she said.

Last January, shortly after having surgery, Spurgeon joined several other representatives of the Oregon School Board Association in traveling to Washington, D.C., to meet with Oregon legislators. Scott Ludwig of La Grande, Spurgeon's uncle, marveled how she made the trip so soon after her operation.

"It was not more than 10 days later and she flew back to Washington, D.C., to lobby for the rural school districts," Ludwig said. "I asked her, 'Why on earth would you do something like that?' She replied, 'I just wanted to feel normal.'"

## DISTRICT

Continued from Page 1A

The district representatives also talked with Baker High School officials about the option of broadcasting Bulldogs sporting events.

"The big reason we're trying to go forward in making a channel, one that you can watch over the air, stream online, and watch on cable is to get a different source of revenue going for the district," McHaddad said. "Over the last 40 years we had the same system of collecting revenue and a lot of people really don't like it."

The district broadcasts more than 20 HD channels and has federal authority to charge residents for viewing the TV signals it broadcasts. The district has sent letters to area property owners seeking the \$100 annual fee if they receive the district's signals via a TV antenna. Those who return the letter and report they don't use the signals don't have to pay the annual fee.

But property owners who do not view the district's TV signals can get an exemption. The district Thursday announced for certain properties, failure to return an exemption by May 31 could mean the fee ends up on property tax bills. For



Submitted photo

This transmitter on Mount Fanny near Cove is part of the Blue Mountain Translator District's network. The district has plans to start a local channel.

more information, contact the district at 541-963-0196 or bmtbd.org@gmail.com.

McHaddad said the district will seek sponsors for the new low-power local

station.

"They'll be able to sponsor the online streaming. The goal of that is to generate enough revenue to support our operations so we can

"Our goal here is to use television to reinvest in the community. Part of our model is that we don't want anything that's created here just to be broadcast here."

— Alex McHaddad, BMTD executive director

reform the way we make money," he said.

The request for proposals seeks a firm that has experience in ad sales. While using a local firm is preferred, the district also will consider proposals from Boise, Walla Walla or the Tri-Cities.

"We want somebody who's able to get sponsors for this channel from this area so that local businesses are sponsoring local television," McHaddad said.

The district also is interested in proposals from local residents about producing shows that could be shown on the new channel.

"Our goal here is to use television to reinvest in the community," McHaddad said. "Part of our model is that we don't want anything that's created here just to be broadcast here. We're going to be building syndication partnerships with other TV stations around the region and the country."

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