

SNAKE RIVER

Ag stakeholders: Draft dam report leaves questions unanswered

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

Agricultural organizations say a draft state-federal report examining the potential costs and other impacts of replacing the benefits of four dams on the lower Snake River raises more questions than it answers.

In fact, the report may take dam breaching off the table completely, one organization's spokesman says.

The Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose and Lower Granite dams on the Snake River have been the target of environmental groups that say they are hindering salmon recovery.

The report estimates it would cost between \$10.3 billion and \$27.2 billion to replace the dams' benefits, which include barging, energy, irrigation, recreation and economic development. Anticipated costs are not available for several other projects that would be required.

Kramer Consulting and Ross Strategic were commissioned by U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and Washington Gov. Jay Inslee to draft the independent report. Report sources include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' 2020 final environmental impact statement and Idaho Rep. Mike Simpson's proposed \$33.5 billion plan for salmon recovery.

"While the (dams) certainly are not the only cause of this decline, their impact on salmon outcomes is significant," the report states.

Replacement of the dams is possible, the report states, "at significant cost and with a major infrastructure program."

"Given the potential magnitude of these costs, significant federal investment will be needed," the report states. "Funding from the recently enacted Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, for example, could be applied to defray the costs of road, rail and water infrastructure, and provide economic development through improvement of broadband services."

"For the folks that want to make a decision based off of this, I think it raises more questions than it actually answers," said Heather Stebbings, executive director of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, a nonprofit trade group that supports regional economic development.



Associated Press File

Ice Harbor Dam, one of four dams on the lower Snake River.

According to the report, breaching the dams would eliminate all commodity barging between the Tri-Cities and Lewiston and Clarkston, causing that transportation to shift to railroads and trucks. Barging could continue between the Tri-Cities and downriver Columbia River ports.

The report calls for a more thorough analysis from the Washington State Department of Transportation regarding the move from barges to roads and railroads, Stebbings said.

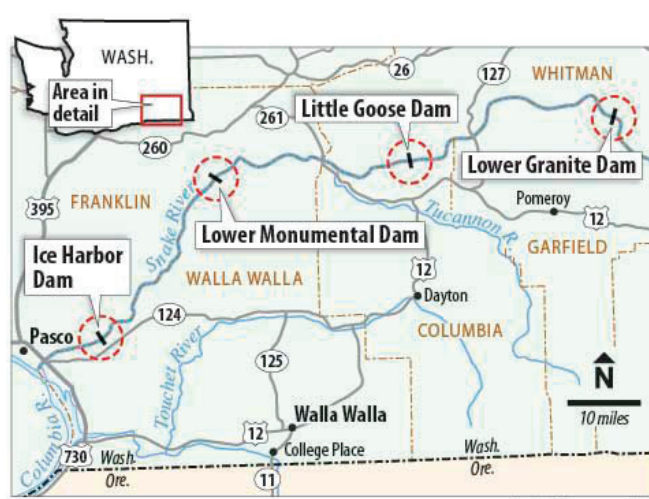
"That's a significant missing piece that would have a lot of associated costs with it, to get that true picture of what would need to be accomplished," she said.

"Realistic" elements are also missing from the draft, Stebbings added, such as the costs involved with permitting, particularly when creating additional rail lines, or building new roads and facilities needed to mitigate the impacts of dam breaching.

"The reality of making that happen is a real unknown," Stebbings said, noting that the new infrastructure would be need to be built near water and on cultural and historic lands. "To build railroads or highways in some of these areas could be very difficult."

Breaching the dams would permanently drain the four lower Snake River reservoirs and create "substantial benefits" for area tribes, the report states.

"It would allow tribal peoples to renew their close religious and spiritual connection with approximately



Capital Press graphic

34,000 acres of land where their ancestors lived and are buried — and allow them to properly care for their grave sites," the report states. "They could return to more than 600 to 700 locations where they were accustomed to live, fish, and hunt; harvest plants, roots and berries, conduct cultural and religious ceremonies, and pursue other aspects of their normal traditional lives."

Restoration of salmon abundance would also greatly benefit tribal fisheries, both commercial and subsistence, the report states. Salmon and steelhead are the primary food sources for Columbia Basin tribes today, and have been for thousands of years, with many eating fish at rates higher than non-native populations.

Matt Harris, director of governmental affairs for the Washington Potato Commission and chairman of the Columbia Basin Development League, said the \$27 billion price tag doesn't necessarily cover ecological damage from removing the

dams, including the cost of dredging and maintaining sediment on the river and the impact on salmon recovery "if you displace or change the environment in such an erroneous fashion."

Harris also wants to know about the higher energy costs consumers and irrigators would pay. He cites reports estimating residents could see a 23% increase to their energy bills.

The report talks in regional fashion, Harris added, but doesn't address the broader impact beyond Washington on the Western Interconnection power grid, which extends from southern Canada to Mexico. Nor does it address the effects of increased atmospheric carbon due to more truck traffic. Also, the roads are not designed to carry the number of trucks that would be needed to replace the barges, he said.

"There's a lot there that this study just does not encompass and it really needs to be re-focused," he said. "It's a bigger conversation than what this study has presented."

"The whole issue is about a lot more than just cutting a check to 'reimburse' people for their losses that could occur if the dams were breached," said Sean Ellis, spokesman for the Idaho Farm Bureau. "Entire industries, including agriculture, depend on the dams for their livelihood and those dams have provided the region with low-cost electricity for decades. Just writing a check and calling it a day does not come close to undoing the damage that would occur if those dams were removed."

Idaho Farm Bureau members "wholeheartedly" support ongoing efforts to improve salmon runs but continue to "adamantly" oppose dam breaching, Ellis said.

"There is no evidence to support the claim that breaching the dams would save the salmon but it's quite clear that doing so would have a major negative effect on the region's economy and put a lot of farmers out of business," Ellis said.

For Darryll Olsen, board member for the Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association in Kennewick, Wash., the report boils down to one half-sentence on page 2 of the report's executive summary: "Congressional authorization would be needed for the Army Corps to pursue breaching the dams."

"If that's their political position, they have effectively taken dam breaching off the table — it's gone," Olsen said. "Congress

COMMENT ON THE REPORT

The draft report will be available for public review through July 11.

Comments on the draft report can be provided through a form on the project website, via email, or by mail.

Online comments can be submitted through the project website: <https://www.lsrdoptions.org/>.

Emailed comments can be sent to info@lsrdoptions.org with the email subject line "Draft LSRD Benefit Replacement Study."

Written comments can be sent via mail to:

Draft LSRD Benefit Replacement Study c/o Ross Strategic

1325 Fourth Ave., Suite 1600

Seattle, WA 98101

All comments must be submitted by 5 p.m. PST on July 11.

will not be approving dam breaching in any appreciable timeframe. Not going to happen. It's certainly not going to happen between now and November, and it's not going to happen after November."

Murray and Inslee are slated to make their final recommendation this summer.

Murray and Inslee "know what they're doing," Olsen said. "These are not incompetent people. They realize they've effectively taken dam breaching off the table."

Olsen expected "quite a bit more structure" in the report, to serve plaintiffs and defendants as environmental groups challenge NOAA's biological opinion in court.

"That's missing, that's kind of not there," he said.

Olsen also questioned the value of listing the potential cost range. But "it wouldn't matter if you said \$270 billion as long as they have made that statement, they want congressional authorization," he said. "That is not going to happen."

The draft report is available to the public and for comment through July 11.

"We continue to approach the question of breaching with open minds and without a predetermined decision," Murray and Inslee stated. "We each remain firmly committed to saving our salmon. We also know that the dams provide significant benefits to our region's economy and communities. In the coming weeks, we will carefully review and consider public input, tribal consultation, and other engagement from stakeholders before making any recommendations."

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2015 TOYT 4RN UT
VIN = JTEBU5JR3F5205083
Amount due on lien \$1515.00
Reputed owner(s)
MARIO ALCARIO REYES
RIVERMARK COMMUNITY CU

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2008 CHEV SLV PK
VIN = 1GCEC190782223374
Amount due on lien \$1535.00
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VIKING ENGINEERING & CONSTRUCTION

PUBLIC LIEN SALE U-STORE SELF STORAGE
Auction Starts June 14, 2022
storageauctions.com
Ends Friday, June 24, 2022 10am

1668 Industrial Way SW
Albany, Oregon
Rebecca Beach, H095; Katrina Briones, A008; Brandon Hayes, Y013; Julia Horton, G054; Grace Moller, G002; Lisa Moore, A031; Dale Morford, G045; Nathan L. Reed, H103; Samantha Reid, Y004; Salvador Sepulveda, A024
1501 Hawthorne Ave NE
Salem, Oregon

Michael Barlow, 1D17; Kristen Blyeth, 2C03; Joseph A Craigmyle, 2B37; William P Floyd II, 1C44; Nicole Haynes, Y11-3, Randall Jordan, 2A77; Anntara Martin, 1C18; Quanne Monette, 1F41; Armando Ochoa Quintero, 1G20; Ember Reed, 2B09; Caitlin Roney, 2A62; Nikki N Roque, 1D14; Elisha Severson, 1E38; Ashley Smaw, 1F35; Troy Vanscoter, Y4-5; St Jon Wilson, 1A01

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VIN = SALGS2VF7GA246669
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2020 FORD F150 PK
VIN = 1FTEW1E40LKD11829
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2015 GMC YUK LL
VIN = 1GKS2CKJ3FR226021
Amount due on lien \$1535.00
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KARAH & CHASE MASON
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2012 TOYT CAM 4D
VIN = 4T1BF1FK2CU030468
Amount due on lien \$1535.00
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JEROME JOSEPH ROSE
AIDEN DONG KIM

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2005 PILG TRL
VIN = 5L4TF272953009793
Amount due on lien \$1435.00
Reputed owner(s)
JEROT BLANCHI

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2012 GMC ACA LL
VIN = 1GKKVTE5CJ314785
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CINDY SUHEY ESCALERA
MAPS CREDIT UNION

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2016 AUDI A3 4D
VIN = WAUA7GFF6G1002602
Amount due on lien \$1455.00
Reputed owner(s)
TIA MARI WILKINS
ALLY FINANCIAL

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2018 SUBA FOR 4D
VIN = JF25JAE6GH419036
Amount due on lien \$1455.00
Reputed owner(s)
HUNG NGUYEN & THUY LE
JP MORGAN CHASE BANK NA

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2018 NISSAN ROGUE LL
VIN = JN8AT2M4JW301757
Amount due on lien \$1555.00
Reputed owner(s)
DEVINDER KAUR
IQ CREDIT UNION

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2012 DODGE R15
PK = 1CGRD7KTCS237973
Amount due on lien \$1455.00
Reputed owner(s)
CHANDLER SHAWN VILLARREAL
OREGON STATE CREDIT UNION

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2012 TOYT PRIUS 4D
VIN = JTDKN3DPXC3023307
Amount due on lien \$1435.00
Reputed owner(s)
JOHN H & JULIE A WIRZ
TOYOTA MOTOR CREDIT CORP

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2015 TOYT COA 4D
VIN = 2T1BURHE3FC246606
Amount due on lien \$1455.00
Reputed owner(s)
NURDIN HASSAN

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
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2015 CHEV SLV PK
VIN = 3GCUKREC3FG159120
Amount due on lien \$1415.00
Reputed owner(s)
RYAN & SHELLY SIEGEL
TOYOTA MOTOR CREDIT CORP

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COPART OF WASHINGTON INC
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2015 HOND CRV UT
VIN = 2HKRM4H5XFH647357
Amount due on lien \$1515.00
Reputed owner(s)
> LORELEI G MATTHEWS
CENTRAL WILLAMETTE COMM CU

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