

Breaching the Dams?

Costs outweigh the benefits

In her Viewpoint "Smells Fishy" (4/21), Sheena Moore calls for removing the four lower Snake River dams to save Northwest salmon. She claims the dams can be removed to increase fish habitat while also retiring Northwest coal plants and producing cheaper energy bills.



That sounds great. But it's not true.

In fact, the very reference Moore uses to make her arguments, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC), debunked similar claims in a letter published in *The Oregonian* March 29, nearly a month before Moore's article appeared in this paper.

In the letter, the executive director of the NPCC, Steve Crow, states that in order to replace the output of the four Snake dams "regional output of existing power plants fired by natural gas and coal would have to *increase* and that *new* natural gas-fired generation would be needed."

NPCC estimates that replacing 1,000 megawatts of clean hydro power from the Snake dams with gas and coal would increase Northwest carbon emissions by an estimated 3 million tons per year, a 7.6 percent increase. These estimates do not include the additional carbon emissions that would result from the loss of navigation and barge transport on the Columbia.

Dam removal would also increase the cost of the power system and force BPA customers – read "you" – to pick up the tab. NPCC estimates energy bills could go up 24 to 29 percent if the Snake dams are breached. That does not include the multi-billion costs of removing the dams.

With state unemployment at 10 percent and economic recovery teetering on the brink, increasing energy bills on Northwest families and businesses by up to 50 percent would be disastrous.

Finally, removing the dams provides no guarantee of improved salmon survival. Thanks to dramatic ratepayer-financed improvements to dams over the last decade, salmon migrating to the ocean through the Columbia power system survive at a rate equal to the rate seen in rivers with no dams.

A study initiated by the Clinton administration analyzed the costs and benefits of dam removal and concluded the costs far outweigh the benefits. The study pointed out that the best spawning habitat is blocked by high private dams which have no fish passage. Further, siltation caused by dam removal could require barging all salmon smolts for up to 10 years.

For years I have encouraged environmental groups like Save Our Wild Salmon to challenge the relicensing of private dams. This would provide huge benefits to fish with little cost to Northwest ratepayers. To date, they have declined to pursue this course of action.

I share Moore's goal of restoring Northwest salmon. That is why I support aggressively implementing the comprehensive federal salmon plan that is currently pending in Judge Redden's court. This plan has been rigorously reviewed by some of the nation's top independent scientists who concluded it is a sound plan based on state-of-the-art scientific analysis. It has been reviewed by the Obama administration's top scientists, who support it. And it is supported by three of the four Northwest states and most of the Northwest Indian tribes with an interest in the Columbia River system fisheries.

This plan – at a cost of \$750 million per year to Northwest ratepayers – is one of the most ambitious and extensive fish and wildlife mitigation programs in the world today. It is responsible for directing \$1 billion to salmon friendly modifications to dams since 2000, restoring more than 100 river miles of fish habitat, reopening 2,000 miles of spawning streams, and significantly reducing predation that kills thousands of adult and juvenile salmon every year.

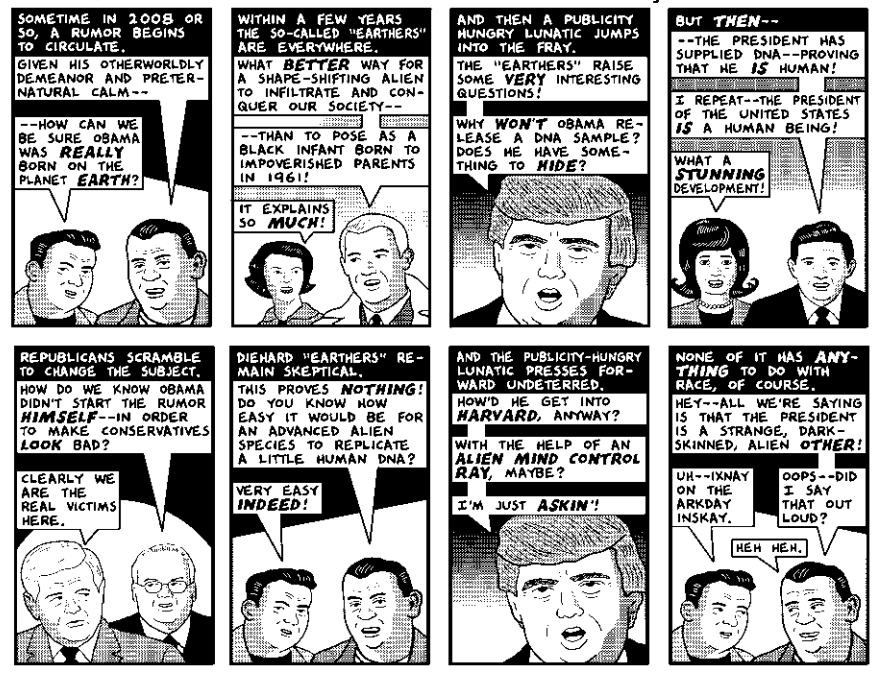
The federal plan is helping to restore salmon populations. Salmon returns to the Columbia Basin have been trending upward for the last 20 years. Preliminary estimates indicate more than 10,000 wild Snake River fall Chinook salmon returned in 2010 – about twice the previous record set in 2001. Snake River spring and summer Chinook returns in the last 10 years are more than three times the average seen during the 1990s. And Snake River sockeye – which were almost entirely wiped out *before* construction began on the federal dams in the Snake River – are making a comeback.

The facts tell us that removing the four lower Snake dams would be costly, risky and unnecessary. We should instead focus our efforts on fully implementing the robust, scientifically-based regional salmon plan that is awaiting Judge Redden's approval.

Peter DeFazio of Springfield serves in Congress, representing Oregon's House District 4.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MARKET MOVING?

Is it true that the Farmers Market is planning to move from our downtown blocks to a fast moving spot closer to the Matt coliseum? Please tell me it isn't so. People come downtown on Saturdays to enjoy walking through the creative and famous joint community of Saturday Market and the Farmers Market, to take in the whole thing. It has been a win win partnership of markets for a long time, and there are hundreds of local vendors who count on the happy shoppers. Last Saturday, I overheard a Farmers Market vendor say that the market wanted to "expand and is eyeing a spot next to The Shedd, near Franklin." That was the first I'd heard of it, and might ruin a very good thing for both markets.

Is it big-business growth mentality that is showing up here, maybe inspired by the electric screen now unavoidable on Franklin Boulevard? Who is calling the shots? I'm guessing that it isn't the tiny vegetable vendors with their small booths. College neighborhoods are not known for rushing over to vegetable stands just to get fresh ingredients for cooking supper. A sports/student neighborhood would support more beer gardens and ready-to-eat food. Nothing wrong with that, for sure, but that isn't the heart and soul of a real farmers market. And ours is already successful — I would hate to lose what we have.

Deb Huntley
Eugene

WHO IS AMERICAN?

Dave Ralston's rant against Centro Latino raises interesting questions. Here's one: Who is an American? Only people in the United States? Well, no. Our neighbors north and south will remind us we aren't the only Americans — not even the only North Americans. We share that distinction with Canadians and, yes, Mexicans. Then there are all the people in Central and South America.

Next question: Must we speak English to be American? Well, no. Hundreds of languages are spoken in the Americas. Here at home, many languages always have been spoken in the land that is now

the U.S. Even among languages brought by European invaders and colonists, English arrived long after Spanish was first spoken in Florida and the Southwest. In fact, the United States *does not have an official national language*. Yes, English is the dominant language, and very useful — that's why immigrants, including newcomers, struggle to learn it and English classes are full.

Last question: Does ethnicity determine our nationality? In many countries the answer, historically, would be yes. That's never been true of the U.S. I'm proud to live here because we've always been a multiethnic nation, benefiting in countless ways from one other's customs, cuisines, cultures, ways of relating and of seeing the world. Yes, it's also true that we've had to deal with deep-seated racism. We still do. But in the U.S, we have an opportunity to open ourselves to one another, to claim our relationships within the human family. Let's try it!

Marion Malcolm
Eugene

YOUNG & WORRIED

I'm a student at the Eugene Waldorf School. I'll go to public school for high school and I'm worried about what it will be like when I get there. My mom's a teacher in 4J, and can only get work as a substitute because they've cut teaching positions. The class sizes keep getting bigger, with classes of 45 freshmen! When I get there, there may be 50 or 60 students per class! It's unbelievable how much is getting cut from public schools. My mom raised me in Eugene because the schools were good, but due to budget cuts they are getting much worse. I feel many things that children are interested in have already been cut.

I'm young, but it deeply upsets me to see how little is invested in schools. Education should be one of, if not *the* top priority for funding. Without it, the future generations will not be able to fix problems that people in this generation have made. Something needs to be done to save education and we can start by voting for the Strong Schools-backed Measure 20-182. Please help make