

Congressman hopes politics align on divisive Northwest dams

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Nearly two decades ago, Republican President George W. Bush stood on a bank of the Snake River near Pasco, Washington, and declared that four hydroelectric dams would not be torn down on his watch, though many blamed them for killing endangered salmon.

This month, Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson of Idaho issued a bold plan that called for removing those same dams to save the salmon. In between those two acts were decades of litigation that show no sign of ending and \$17 billion worth of improvements to the dams that did little to help fish.

Now the question is: Can Simpson's plan win approval from Congress and the Biden administration and help save an iconic Pacific Northwest species from extinction?

Other Republicans are vowing to save the dams.



The Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River is seen from the air near Colfax, Washington. A Republican congressman has proposed removing four hydroelectric dams in the Northwest, including the Lower Granite Dam, as part of a sweeping plan to save salmon populations and provide aid to farmers and others.

Democrats have come out in support of Simpson's plan, which calls for spending \$33 billion to breach four dams, replace the lost hydro-

electric energy with other sources and ensure that irrigation, river navigation and flood control will continue as before.

The issue of what to do with the Snake River dams has long divided the Pacific Northwest, with Democrats generally siding with saving

the salmon and Republicans saying it's foolish to remove hydropower resources in the era of climate change.

But Lindsay Slater, Simpson's chief of staff, said the political winds are blowing in favor of a solution to this decades-long controversy.

For one thing, the Biden administration is preparing a massive economic relief package for the nation, and Simpson wants the Northwest to designate this solution to the salmon issues for the region's share of the package, Slater said. For another, Democratic control of the Senate has propelled numerous longtime senators from the Northwest into committee leadership positions for the first time in years, he said.

"There is all this seniority in the Northwest," Slater said, pointing to Washington Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell and Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden.

"This is lightning in a bottle. It really is," Slater said. "We are telling stakeholders this is a once-in-30-years opportunity. Do we

want to grab it?"

Simpson was motivated by the prospect of continued litigation even as salmon die off, Slater said.

Simpson unveiled the plan in a video posted to his website on Saturday, saying, "The current system is clearly not working."

Four Republican House members — Cathy McMorris Rodgers, Dan Newhouse and Jaime Herrera Beutler, all from Washington, and Rep. Russ Fulcher of Idaho — oppose Simpson's plan.

"The hydropower developed in the Pacific Northwest benefits every resident, family, and business in our region," they said in a joint statement. "Without it, life as we know it in our region would cease to exist."

McMorris Rodgers, whose district has several of the dams, has long fought to preserve the structures.

"Spending more than \$33 billion to breach them — with no guarantee that doing so will restore salmon populations — is a drastic, fiscally irresponsible leap to take," she said.

Oregon releases first missing and murdered Indigenous persons report

By LAUREN DAKE
Oregon Public Broadcasting

SALEM — Rosenda Strong was missing for nearly a year before her body was found in an abandoned freezer on July 4, 2019, near Toppenish, Washington.

"We have her back; not the way we wanted but we can after 275 days looking, wondering, our baby sister, mother, aunt, cousin, friend is coming home to our mother," Cissy Strong Reyes, wrote in a Facebook post, according to reporting by the *Yakima Herald-Republic*.

For years, activists have

tried to draw attention to a growing crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous people, particularly women. There have been many challenges, including confusion surrounding different jurisdictions, a lack of coordination between law enforcement entities, not enough resources and gaps in data.

Over the period of time Strong was missing, the conversation around missing Indigenous women grew louder. Reyes started sharing her sister's story as loud as she could, determined to not let her be one of the forgotten ones.

"I read stories on the inter-

net and stopped to think, like, there's these other women missing, and I can't let my sister be one of these people. She has to be found," Reyes told the *Yakima Herald-Republic*.

In 2019, a national strategy was created in an attempt to rectify the underreporting of missing and murdered Indigenous people. Last week, the U.S. Attorney's Office released its first annual report.

"For generations, American Indians and Alaskan Natives have suffered from disproportionately high levels of violence. Tragically, this is not a crisis of the past; it's

a crisis of the present," U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams said in a statement.

Under what has been coined the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Initiative, officials in 11 U.S. Attorney's offices, including Oregon, will create a more coordinated law enforcement response to missing persons cases, according to the press release from Williams' office. The new effort also calls for improving data, both collection and analysis, and for more training for local response efforts when a person is reported as missing.

One of the first steps is to create an overview of

current missing persons cases connected to Oregon. The report draws on data from several different databases and identified 19 unsolved cases of people who have connections with Oregon. The latest information, while only considered a "snapshot" of the full picture, shows 11 missing Indigenous persons, six women and five men.

Of the 11, six are members of Oregon tribes:

- Two are from the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.
- One is from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

- Two are from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.
- One is from the Klamath Tribes.

The report identifies eight murdered Indigenous people, three men and five women. Of the eight, seven are members of an Oregon tribe.

One of those is Strong, who was a 31-year-old mother of four and a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Strong's family is hoping in 2021 they will find out who killed her and finally be able to bury her body.

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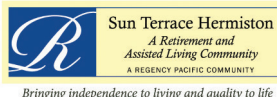
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