



Associated Press, File

The Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River. A coalition of stakeholders has sent a letter to the region's political leaders opposing a plan to remove it and three other dams.

Stakeholders send letter opposing Simpson dam plan to NW political leaders

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**
Capital Press

SALEM — A coalition of 45 stakeholders has sent a letter to Northwest lawmakers voicing their opposition to Idaho Rep. Mike Simpson's \$33.5 billion proposal to remove four dams on the Lower Snake River.

The proposal, which is aimed at helping the salmon population recover, includes a 35-year moratorium on dam litigation, among other actions.

Simpson announced the proposal in February, but has not introduced legislation.

"It is a speculative and costly plan that assumes we must choose between productive, fish-friendly federal projects and our Northwest salmon and steelhead runs," the March 23 letter states. "We believe this is a false choice, and ignores the broad commitment to salmon recovery that must be region-wide and sustained for generations."

"Congress typically doesn't dedicate billions of taxpayer dollars without knowing exactly how it will be allocated first," Washington Grain Commission CEO Glen

Squires told the *Capital Press*. "His concept proposal is so broad in scope that dozens of congressional committees and executive branch agencies probably have jurisdiction over parts of it."

Many Pacific Northwest members of Congress are also opposed to the plan, Squires said.

"Those supporting removal have been seeking removal of the four specific dams for decades, so nothing really new there," he said.

Ag groups will continue to voice their concerns about removal of the dams and cite their role in agriculture, irrigation and movement of goods, Squires said.

Dam removal would have impacts on the environment, hydropower and increase freight rates for wheat. Squires points to the added road damage costs and effect on timely delivery of other freight and services.

"Removal is not a silver bullet to salmon recovery for Snake River salmon," Squires said. "There is more to it than four lower Snake River dams."

Squires and other stakeholders point to ideas and actions identified in NOAA Fisheries' salmon recovery plan.

Legislature again mulls Wallowa Lake Dam funding

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieflain

WALLOWA LAKE — Although sales for bonds to fund the \$16 million refurbishment of the Wallowa Lake Dam were supposed to begin this month, the Oregon Legislature put that on hold for a year because the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp drop in Oregon Lottery revenue.

But lawmakers and dam stakeholders are optimistic the funding will come through this year.

"What they have decided to do is include those in discussion for this year's funding cycle. Because they were in the governor's, that gives us some options," state Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, said Thursday, March 25.

He said although the lottery funding is "trending in the right direction," it may not be necessary to rely on the bonds and the money could come out of general fund or another fund.

"We won't need to go to lottery bonds in that case," he said.

The plan was to raise \$14 million through sale of bonds from lottery revenue and begin selling them this month, with work on the dam to begin after irrigation season ends Sept. 30. Another \$2 million of the \$16 million project will be raised from "other sources," said Dan Butterfield, president of the Wallowa Lake Irrigation District, which owns the dam.

"There's been some outside interest expressing a desire to help," he said. "But we may have to fund that ourselves."

He said the project is wait-

ing for the state money to be assured before seeking the additional funds.

"That has to be solidified before we break ground," he said.

Butterfield was encouraged the governor and lawmakers seem enthusiastic about funding the dam this year.

"She's the reason we got put on the budget in the beginning," he said of Gov. Kate Brown. "It's nice to have support at that level."

In addition to the irrigation district, the stakeholders in the dam project include the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Nez Perce Tribe and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Last fall, all four entities signed a memorandum of agreement to support the project. The latter three stakeholders primarily are interested in natural resources concerns at the dam, such as a fish passage from the Wallowa River to the lake and downstream watersheds. The irrigation district manages the lake level and outflows for agricultural irrigation.

The dam and more than 30 other projects were put on hold when the June lottery report came in below the 4-to-1 ratio needed to sell bonds to fund them. That means \$4 million in lottery revenue must come in to sell \$1 million in bonds. The report came in at only 3.1-to-1.

Hansell said final word on lottery funding won't come in until June. If it's sufficient, bonds can be sold beginning in April 2022, with construction to begin that fall.



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New Chamber Office Hours:
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Kristina Olivas Chosen as Chamber Chief Executive Officer



The Greater Hermiston Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors is pleased to announce that Kristina Olivas of Hermiston has been selected as the Chamber's Chief Executive Officer. Olivas will begin work March 30.

As CEO, Olivas will lead interactions with the Chamber's 400+ members, plan events and activities, coordinate the various Chamber committees and manage efforts to develop a new Chamber office and workforce development center at South Highway 395 and East Evelyn Avenue.

Olivas has spent the past five years as Human Resources Office and Training Manager at the Walmart Distribution Center. Among her duties leading an HR department, she provided counseling, coaching and policy leadership to nearly 1,000 employees. She previously worked as a purchasing and maintenance planning manager at Oregon Potato Company in Boardman and as a sales associate at Wilcox Furniture.

Olivas brings the experience, skills and personality needed to connect with a culturally diverse and growing community, said Annette Kirkpatrick, Chamber board president. "We are impressed with Kristina's energy, work history and love of community," Kirkpatrick said, "She has a natural ability to listen and connect with others. We expect Kristina to not only continue our successful programs, but to work with members, partners and community stakeholders to bring our Chamber to a new level of service."

Hermiston born and raised, bilingual in Spanish and English, mother of two-teenaged daughters and a young son, Olivas enjoys spending time with family and exploring the Pacific Northwest.

For work, "My career goal as always been to develop professional and personal relationships while building the Community I love," Olivas said. "I feel excitement and pride, I'm so proud to be on the front lines in representing the businesses of Hermiston." Olivas was chosen by the Chamber Board of Directors to fill the position vacated by Kim Rill, who left in February for a workforce development job.

Members can call the Chamber office to schedule a time on the radio to share about your business!

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