

OUR VIEW

Breaching
dams is a
bad option

Though hardly the last word on Lower Snake River dams, federal agencies with jurisdiction have affirmed in a final environmental impact statement that breaching four dams in Eastern Washington is a bad idea.

We agree. Let the lawsuits continue.

The dams in Southeast Washington generate electricity and allow farmers to move grain by barge down the Columbia River’s main tributary.

Without the dams, the river would be too shallow to barge wheat and other farm goods the roughly 100 miles between Lewiston, Idaho, and the Tri-Cities. Lake Sacajawea, a reservoir created by Ice Harbor Dam, irrigates 47,000 acres. The loss of electricity generated by the dams would increase the cost of pumping groundwater.

In a ruling in December 2018, U.S. District Judge Michael Simon required the EIS as part of a lawsuit over protected fish species, including an alternative focused on removal of the four Snake River dams and their impacts.

In the final report, agencies rejected pleas from environmental and fishing groups to breach Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor dams on the Lower Snake River.

The report acknowledged that breaching the dams would do more for fish. But it also would damage the federal system’s other uses, such as flood control, irrigation, navigation, recreation and electricity generation.

The agencies said they couldn’t breach the dams unless Congress changed their mandate.

The report’s “preferred alternative” on operating the system includes modifying some fish-passage structures and spilling more water over dams to benefit endangered runs of salmon and steelhead in the Lower Columbia and Snake rivers. That option for river management complies with President Trump’s order to secure reliable water supplies in the West.

The final report mirrors the conclusions of a draft released in February. Outraged by the draft report, environmental and fishing groups renewed their opposition to the final EIS and urged Congress to intervene.

“The federal plan totally and completely fails Idaho and isn’t good enough for the many guides, outfitters, river businesses and communities in Idaho that depend on healthy runs of fish,” Idaho Conservation League Executive Director Justin Hayes said in a statement.

“The Trump administration’s reckless rush to finalize the Columbia Basin hydropower review process is heartbreaking and immoral,” said Natural Resources Defense Council senior attorney Giulia Good Stefani.

The final environmental impact statement lays the foundation for a decision next month on operating 14 federal dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers.

But this is no way the final word on the subject of dams on the Columbia-Snake system. Environmentalists and fishing groups won’t stop litigating until the courts or Congress order the removal of the dams.

If they win, it will be at the expense of the entire region that depends on low-cost and reliable electricity the dams provide and the livelihoods of farmers, barge operators, deck hands, dock workers in the region and the vendors who support them.

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Your views

Trying to keep Oregon together isn't divisive

Having nothing better to do I have been marking off the days on my calendar until I could write another letter. Thank you to Mr. Donald Neugart for providing me with some new subject matter.

Dear Mr. Neugart: I am truly sorry that my recent letter pertaining to the “Move Oregon’s Border” group rankled you so severely. I was only expressing what I believe to be the ridiculousness, absurdity and futility of such a venture, when the solution is so simple and evident. My perception, my opinion. You begin your hate of me by accusing me of alienating and dividing with my written words — “message” I believe is what you called it. This strikes me as odd since I am not the one that wishes to divide our entire, beautiful state of Oregon, giving most of it to Idaho. I am quite certain that I did not threaten you sir, unless it

Letters to the editor

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was with a different ideology. Nor did I label you. That you choose to label me as a leftist and a hypocrite along with threatening me in a public forum — “I would tread lightly, if I were you, Mr. Meyer” — is not only a little scary but speaks volumes on your character and composition. Peace, especially to you Mr. Neugart, and “All.”

P.S. It would be pretty hard to send me “back” to Portland Mr. Neugart, since I’ve never lived there? I’ll be marking off

the calendar once again.

Mike Meyer
Baker City

Who’s behind the rash of recent bicycle thefts?

What’s with all the bicycle thefts lately? Some local Facebook groups report about one a loss a day. And you can’t help but notice some of the homeless types riding bikes that have been freshly spray painted.

We’ll assume the coming colder weather will put a stop to much of this. But what about the local meth-heads that still need to steal to support their habit? It’s not just bikes vanishing from people’s property. Where is this stuff being fenced?

What do we do here? If our law enforcement can’t address this, you’re looking at vigilante citizens that are about ready to ...

Dan Collins
Baker City

Reopening schools: A balance

By Joanne Berger-Sweeney

Reopening schools, including colleges and universities, has become a political issue. Some argue that the media is engaging in fearmongering and the COVID-19 crisis is inflated, especially for young adults — why not open? Some argue that institutions of higher education are only considering opening to ensure their financial existence — why not stay safe and remain closed?

These are simplistic dichotomies, and the decision to reopen schools should not be an issue advanced by one political party or the other but based on facts and guided by local conditions. This pandemic has created complex choices. My choice is to open Trinity College — an urban, residential, liberal arts college — to in-person, hybrid and remote classes.

When I consider my decision to reopen Trinity College to students on campus, I have a decision-matrix in mind that includes some of these critical questions:

- How can we best fulfill our educational mission to prepare students to be bold independent thinkers who lead transformative lives?
- How do we best ensure an equitable educational experience for all Trinity students?
- What are the risks to health and safety for our community?
- How do we fulfill our social mission to support the city of Hartford and the state of Connecticut?

Not one of these is an easy question to answer independently, and when we consider them simultaneously, it can be overwhelming.

At Trinity College, we thrive on personalized interactions among students — with each other, and with faculty, coaches, staff and alumni. In-person learning is our greatest opportunity to ensure equitable access to the full Trinity experience — the transformative combination of classroom, residential and experiential learning along with academic support, and mental health and wellness care.

For each of our students, we provide a rich learning environment — interactions with mentors, places for quiet concentration, access to books and computers, and we provide health and food security on campus. And in this fertile learning environment, as we prepare our students to be engaged citizens who lead transformative lives, we expect them to understand how to navigate adversity, overcome obstacles and find solutions to problems that have never before been posed.

In the middle of a pandemic, we must help the Trinity community understand how each of us plays a role in promoting health and safety without succumbing to overwhelming fear that could lead to helplessness. We must take responsibility to be positive leaders in challenging times and share our knowledge of how we can live as safely as possible in a pandemic.

Ultimately, we must balance our needs as an institution with our important role as an economic engine in the city of Hartford and the state of Connecticut that brings jobs and financial resources that allow others in

our community to work and thrive. We take these complex roles very seriously, which leads us to respond.

In order to make our community as safe as possible as we return to Trinity’s campus, we will provide public health education to our campus community. We will require pre-arrival COVID-19 testing and quarantine and promote shared responsibility and safe practices of wearing masks, physical distancing and hand washing to demonstrate our care for each other and for the broader community. We will rigorously engage in testing to ensure that we do not spread COVID-19 and educate ourselves about the essential role that vaccines play in disease control. We will reduce density on our campus and allow those who are able to work from home to do so.

And we will be flexible and adapt to changing conditions based on scientific facts and best practices shared by our state and other public health agencies. We do reserve the right to change course as this fast-moving environment evolves, but we remain optimistic.

I continue to promote reopening Trinity College. We have much to contribute to our communities — our educational and financial resources, volunteerism and neighborhood support, and contributions to knowledge in a knowledge-based economy.

Joanne Berger-Sweeney is the president of Trinity College in Hartford and a professor of neuroscience.

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