

Debate over Snake dams heats up

■ Idaho Congressman Mike Simpson calls for removing the four dams on the lower Snake River

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



Ted S. Warren/Associated Press

The Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River is seen in 2019 from the air near Colfax, Washington. U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, 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 to provide aid to farmers and others.

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 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 — opposed 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.

Conservation and tribal groups issued statements supporting Simpson's proposal.

"We've spent decades making minor improvements and adjustments that simply haven't worked, and what we really need is serious funding and a major overhaul," said Liz Hamilton, executive director of the Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association.

"Healthy populations of wild salmon and steelhead are essential for Northwest tribes, local economies and the region's way of life — and they're running out of time," said Collin O'Mara, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation.

The plan calls for the removal of the Lower Granite Dam near Colfax in 2030, with removal of three other dams — Ice Harbor, Little Goose and Lower Monumental — in 2031. The dams were built in the 1950s and 1960s to provide power, flood control, irrigation and to make navigable a portion of the Snake River from Lewiston, Idaho, to the Tri-Cities of Richland, Kennewick and Pasco in Washington, and downriver to Pacific Ocean ports.

SUSPECTS

Continued from Page 3A

Judge Vitolins said in the Feb. 10 hearing, after reviewing the interview tapes, that Mobley read Miranda rights to Isaac Connery quickly and did not ask if he understood those rights before immediately beginning questioning. Several minutes into the interview Isaac Connery requested a lawyer.

On the stand, Mobley said he is required to stop questioning a suspect if they request a lawyer but is not required to stop talking to them.

Instead of stopping the interview, Mobley said he told Isaac Connery how he planned to proceed, by arresting two of his siblings and a family friend in connection to the murders.

"I believed I had probable cause for the arrests of them," Mobley said on the stand.

Mobley said he then told Isaac Connery during the interview that Oregon was a death penalty state, which he said he believed was accurate at the time.

Mobley said Isaac Connery then told him he would talk but only if Jones and Komning left the room. He said the others left, and Isaac Connery confessed.

Isaac Connery's attorney, Geoffrey Gokey, said Mobley used "deceptive police tactics."

Carpenter said in his release that Oregon's law regarding Miranda rights is clear, and he expected the court to rule as it did.

"We have to deal with the facts as they exist, not as we would like them to be," Carpenter said. "Connery had the right to be advised of his rights in a way that he understood, and the right to have an attorney present when he requested one. The police must recognize those rights and proceed accordingly."

County commissioners reset hearing on zoning changes

By Samantha O'Conner
soconner@bakercityherald.com

Baker County Commissioners decided Wednesday, Feb. 17 to reschedule a public hearing for proposed changes to the county's zoning ordinance to their next regular meeting, March 3.

In other business, commissioners unanimously approved the agree-

ment between the Sheriff's Office and Equature for recording calls at the 911 dispatch center. Sheriff Travis Ash said the five-year maintenance agreement costs \$6,950 per year.

Commissioners also unanimously approved applying for \$131,400 from a state transportation program on behalf of Community Connection,

which would use the money to provide transportation for seniors and residents with disabilities.

Commissioners also discussed a separate state transportation that both Community Connection and Elkhorn Taxi are interested in applying for.

Commissioners will continue their discussion on that program, which

has \$636,000 available, during a March 10 work session.

"We are on the hook for everything that's spent and I would just like to clearly understand," Commissioner Mark Bennett said.

In the meantime the county will send in an application, leaving the financial allocations blank pending the March 10 discussion.

COUNCIL

Continued from Page 1A

Councilors discussed writing a joint letter of support, and individual letters, supporting the continued employment of a school resource officer, a city police officer who works primarily in schools.

Councilor Lynette Perry, talking about safety in Geiser-Pollman Park, said she'd like to see the city have someone patrolling the park regularly during the summer. Perry said she's seen a lot of drug activity there.

Councilor Heather Sells said she likes the idea of collaborating with the county to patrol the Adler Parkway, the paved path that follows the Powder River.

Under the water/wastewater category, councilors said they want to prioritize thinning forests to reduce the wildfire risk in the city's 10,000-acre watershed in the Elkhorn Mountains.

Under the self-sufficiency category, Mayor Kerry McQuisten said she feels the city is at "the mercy of things we shouldn't be" in regards to state and federal mandates.

Councilors said they want to speak with multiple groups, including the American Red Cross, the county's emergency management department and Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative, about emergency preparedness and what the city could expect if it was cut off during a disaster.

"If something catastrophic happened it'd be nice to say OK, it doesn't matter what the rest of the state is doing, we're in a bubble and we're safe," McQuisten said. "We have enough to get people by for two weeks, six months, whatever."

In discussing livability, Councilor Johnny Waggoner Sr. suggested that City Manager Jonathan Cannon could "get some input from department heads in building and code and water,

maybe we could come up with something to promote new housing."

Councilors talked about improving transparency with citizens by launching a new city website and making better use of the city's Facebook page.

The Council also plans to review the city charter to see if councilors want to ask voters, who have the final say on the charter, to make any changes to that document.

Conservative icon Rush Limbaugh dies

By Matt Sedensky
AP National Writer

Rush Limbaugh, the talk radio host who ripped into liberals and laid waste to political correctness with a gleeful malice that made him one of the most powerful voices in politics, influencing the rightward push of American conservatism and the rise of Donald Trump, died Wednesday. He was 70.

Limbaugh said a year ago that he had lung cancer. His death was announced on his show by his wife, Kathryn.

Unflinchingly conservative, wildly partisan, bombastically self-promoting and larger than life, Limbaugh galvanized listeners for more than 30 years with his talent for sarcastic, insult-laced commentary.

He called himself an enter-

tainer, but his rants during his three-hour weekday radio show broadcast on nearly 600 U.S. stations shaped the national political conversation, swaying ordinary Republicans and the direction of their party.

Blessed with a made-for-broadcasting voice, he delivered his opinions with such certainty that his followers, or "Ditto-heads," as he dubbed them, took his words as sacred truth.

"In my heart and soul, I know I have become the intellectual engine of the conservative movement," Limbaugh, with typical immodesty, told author Zev Chafets in the 2010 book "Rush Limbaugh: An Army of One."

Forbes magazine estimated

his 2018 income at \$84 million, ranking him only behind Howard Stern among radio personalities.

Limbaugh took as a badge of honor the title "most dangerous man in America." He said he was the "truth detector," the "doctor of democracy," a "lover of mankind," a "harmless, lovable little fuzz ball" and an "all-around good guy." He claimed he had "talent on loan from God."

Limbaugh often enunciated the Republican platform better and more entertainingly than any party leader, becoming a GOP kingmaker whose endorsement and friendship were sought. Polls consistently found he was regarded as a voice of the party.

His idol, Ronald Reagan,

wrote a letter of praise that Limbaugh proudly read on the air in 1992: "You've become the number one voice for conservatism." In 1994, Limbaugh was so widely credited with the first Republican takeover of Congress in 40 years that the GOP made him an honorary member of the new class.

During the 2016 presidential primaries, Limbaugh said he realized early on that Trump would be the nominee, and he likened the candidate's deep connection with his supporters to his own. In a 2018 interview, he conceded Trump is rude but said that is because he is "fearless and willing to fight against the things that no Republican has been willing to fight against."



Limbaugh



Waggoner

WESLEY FINANCIAL GROUP, LLC

We Cancel TIMESHARES for You

Every year 150,000 people reach out to us for help getting rid of their timeshare. In 2019, we relieved over \$50,000,000 in timeshare debt and maintenance fees. We can help.

Get your free information kit and see if you qualify:

855-385-4473

LeafFilter GUTTER PROTECTION

NO MORE GUTTER CLEANING, OR YOUR MONEY BACK GUARANTEED!

CALL US TODAY FOR A FREE ESTIMATE **1-855-536-8838**

15% OFF YOUR ENTIRE PURCHASE

AND!

10% OFF SENIOR & MILITARY DISCOUNTS

+ 5% OFF TO THE FIRST 50 CALLERS**

Promo Number: 285 Mon-Thurs: 8am-11pm, Fri-Sat: 8am-5pm, Sun: 2pm-8pm EST

*For those who qualify. One coupon per household. No obligation estimate valid for 1 year. **Offer valid at estimate only. CSL# 1032795 DGPL #1078358-5501 License# P756 License# 50145 License# 41354 License# 99336 License# 125344 License# 018294 License# 603 233 9771 License# 2102212986 License# 2106212946 License# 2705121513A License# LEAFNR822J License# WV05612 License# WC-29988-117 Nassau H.C. License# H01067000 Registration# 176447 Registration# HIC060995 Registration# C17723 Registration# C17729 Registration# 36502019 Registration# PC5475 Registration# H071804 Registration# 13140995300 Registration# PA09383 Sufolk H.C. License# 52229-H

MILLER'S HOME CENTER

BRINGING QUALITY PRODUCTS AT AFFORDABLE PRICING TO EASTERN OREGON

Try the SHIP TO STORE feature at millershomecenter.com

3815 Pocatontas Road, Baker City • 541-523-6404

3109 May Lane, La Grande • 541-963-3113