

*Working together to serve  
and improve the small  
grains industry of  
Washington*



2702 W. Sunset Blvd. Ste. A  
Spokane, Washington 99224  
(509) 456-2481  
FAX (509) 456-2812  
[www.wagrains.org](http://www.wagrains.org)



109 E First Ave.  
Ritzville, WA 99169  
(509) 659-0610  
FAX (509) 659-4302  
[www.wawg.org](http://www.wawg.org)

## NEWS RELEASE

# Washington wheat sides with federal report to preserve the Snake River dams

### Wheat industry encouraged to submit comments on Environmental Impact Study

(March 2, 2020, Spokane, WA) Nearly four years after U.S. District Court Judge Michael Simon ordered the federal government to develop an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that included a dam breaching alternative for restoring endangered species salmon runs, the draft report reviewed and rejected the approach.

Released jointly by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bonneville Power Administration and the Bureau of Reclamation on Feb. 28, the more-than-600-page report argued that modest changes to the Columbia River System would increase salmon survival while providing the least impact to electrical generation, transportation, greenhouse gas emissions and farmers' production costs.

Glen Squires, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission, applauded the report's findings, which he said squared with the wheat industry's own observations.

"Given the river system's multi-use mission, commonsense would suggest that breaching the dams would be a non-starter, but you never know what a government study will find. We are grateful that the three federal agencies involved support the fact that dams and salmon can co-exist," he said.

Squires pointed out that previous upgrades to fish passage have enabled a 96 percent survival rate. Meanwhile, ocean conditions continue to have the greatest impact on salmon survival, while breaching would create substantial environmental and infrastructure challenges.

The EIS laid out several models, providing the pros and cons of each over a period of time ranging from 25 years to 50 years. Alternative 3, which focused on breaching the four lower Snake River dams, predicted the highest benefits for several ESA-listed juvenile and adult salmon, but would prevent the co-lead agencies from fulfilling their Congressionally authorized mandate for navigation, hydropower, recreational benefits and water for irrigation.

Michelle Hennings, executive director of the Washington Association of Wheat Growers, said she was gratified by the report's holistic approach to its directive.

“The fact that the study looked at each piece of the puzzle and then assembled those pieces into a coherent whole with fish survival at the center of the picture—and still rejected dam breaching—is very telling,” she said. But this is not the time for congratulations, she continued. “This is a draft report, and the comments sent in response to its findings have an impact. It is imperative that all those who ship grain in Washington write a response to this draft.”

In the end, the EIS picked a “preferred alternative” that cherry-picked the best measures from the other models.

“Washington’s small grain industry supports increasing salmon numbers, and we believe that along with the modifications already made to lower Snake River dams, the additional changes suggested in the EIS will only improve salmon numbers further,” Squires said.

To review the draft EIS and provide your comments, visit the Columbia River System Operations Web page at <https://www.nwd.usace.army.mil/CRSO/> or mail written comments by April 13, 2020, to: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Attn: CRSO EIS, P.O. Box 2870, Portland, OR 97208-2870

##

For more information contact:

Michelle Hennings, Executive Director, Washington Association of Wheat Growers – (509) 659-0610, [michelle@wawg.org](mailto:michelle@wawg.org)

Glen Squires, CEO, Washington Grain Commission – (509) 456-2481, [gsquires@wagrains.org](mailto:gsquires@wagrains.org)