

1 **NORTHWEST PUBLIC POWER ASSOCIATION**

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3 **2-05 Archive Resolution**

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5 **OPPOSE RESERVOIR DRAWDOWN OR DAM BREACHING PRACTICES**
6 **WITHOUT SCIENTIFIC JUSTIFICATION**
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8 Breaching of the lower Snake River dams, and drawing down the
9 reservoir behind the John Day Dam is often considered as a way to help
10 rebuild the declining salmon populations. Adoption of a drawdown or
11 breaching strategy is not warranted for the following reasons:

- 12 1. There is no credible biological evidence that drawdown or breaching
13 would help the salmon and sturgeon. In fact, drawdown or breaching
14 could produce several major impediments (e.g. gas supersaturation
15 and elimination of adult passage) to salmon survival and wind up
16 harming rather than helping the listed species.
- 17 2. Drawdown or breaching would likely cause serious impacts to
18 resident fish and shellfish, public and private property along the river,
19 navigation, recreation, irrigation, and power production. With
20 estimates of the total cost of drawdown or breaching as high as
21 approximately \$5 billion and estimates of the time needed as long as
22 15 or more years, it is clear that drawdown or breaching deserve
23 careful scrutiny, including NEPA analysis, prior to being given serious
24 consideration. Additionally, scientific studies indicate that it might be
25 as long as three decades before we see any significant benefits from
26 dam destruction.

27 In December of 2000, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
28 issued its "Biological Opinion" that indicated that ocean conditions and
29 estuaries are a major problem and that the impacts of dams are less, and
30 perhaps different, than earlier thought. The NMFS study brings into
31 focus the fact that breaching dams may not be an effective way to save
32 salmon from extinction on the Lower Snake River.

33 While the NMFS Biological Opinion does not entirely rule out
34 breaching as a recovery option, it does impose strict performance
35 standards on salmon recovery that will challenge hydropower system
36 operators, hatchery and fishery managers and users of habitat to meet
37 rigorous survival goals by 2003. If the goals are not met during the
38 benchmark years of 2003, 2005 and 2008, breaching efforts of the four
39 lower Snake River Dams may resume.

40 However, judicial actions regarding fish listings will have a far-
41 reaching impact on how goals and standards are interpreted in the
42 benchmark years. A U.S. District Judge ruling revoked a 1998 NMFS
43 regulation protecting wild Coho salmon but not hatchery salmon. This
44 policy change has significant implications because it no longer
45 differentiates between a wild salmon and a hatchery salmon – ultimately
46 boosting the number of fish being counted in the Snake River. A larger
47 overall fish return will lessen the likelihood of triggering a breach
48 alternative in the benchmark years of 2003, 2005 and 2008.

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51 The Northwest Public Power Association requests that the U.S.
52 Congress and the federal government acknowledge that breaching dams
53 on the main stem of the Columbia or Snake rivers or operating these
54 dams under a natural river operating system would not be more effective
55 than other options for enhancing anadromous fish runs and that these
56 other options can be implemented without the staggering costs to the
57 region caused by dam breaching or drawdown options.

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61 Origination Date: 1997

62 Archived: 2005