

Lower Snake River dams provide outstanding value to the nation

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As the District Engineer responsible for operating the four federal dams on the lower Snake River, I'd like to bring some clarity to a discussion that, thus far, is long on hyperbole but lacks balance.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers operates the four lower Snake River dams, and the best available science and economic analyses clearly show the Snake River dams provide outstanding value to the Nation. Snake River dams deliver clean, renewable hydropower, an efficient marine transportation corridor, and valuable recreation opportunities. They provide these benefits at a very reasonable cost while successfully coexisting with fish and wildlife.

Reliable, Renewable, Flexible, Affordable Power

Snake River dams are able to meet peak power loads using turbines that can be adjusted in seconds. The flexibility of hydropower dams makes it possible to integrate highly-variable wind energy into the power grid. When the wind speed changes, some power source has to be immediately ready to add or reduce power to keep the grid stable; hydropower provides that capability. Coal and nuclear power plants require hours for their power output to be adjusted. If you like wind power, you must acknowledge flexible hydropower is a great partner for wind.

The energy produced by the lower Snake River Dams is also relatively inexpensive. The public spends about \$62 million per year to operate these dams. For the past six years the annual return on this investment was over \$200 million of clean electricity. These dams provide enough energy to power 676,000 homes a year while avoiding the 7,317 kilotons of carbon dioxide emissions a coal plant would produce.

Environmentally Responsible Transportation

About 3.5 million tons of cargo valued at \$1.5 billion passes through Snake River navigation locks each year. Marine transportation is the most efficient means to move bulk cargo, reducing cost and minimizing greenhouse gas emissions.

Recreation

The lakes created by these dams provide thousands of acres of water and lakeside recreation for 2.8 million visitors each year.

Environmental Sustainability

The lower Snake River dams are equipped with the most advanced fish passage systems in the world. Last year brought some of the highest Fall Chinook, Coho and Sockeye salmon returns to the Lower Snake River since Snake River dam construction began in 1962. On the lower Snake River, Corps scientists and engineers team with our many partners to prove dams and fish can co-exist.

The lower Snake River dams provide outstanding value to the Nation. The Corps of Engineers is committed to ensuring these important national resources are well maintained to serve future generations in an environmentally responsible manner.

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