

Energy, Salmon, Agriculture and Community: Can We Come Together?



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE



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Energy, Salmon, Agriculture, and Community: Can We Come Together?
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Conference Proceedings

Prepared for the Andrus Center for Public Policy

by John Freemuth, PhD

Cecil D. Andrus Endowed Chair for Environment and Public Lands

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The Pacific Northwest faces two crises that threaten the region, its 11 million people, the future of wild salmon, and the region's critical public electrical power system. Despite spending more than \$16 billion, wild salmon are still on the edge of extinction in the Snake River. At the same time, a revolution in the electric industry has dramatically reduced the cost of power causing a major energy surplus and threatening the financial viability of the Bonneville Power Administration.

To save salmon and the power system that has provided the Pacific Northwest with many benefits, including a stable power supply for the region, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana must come together to resolve the 25-year conflict over energy, salmon, agriculture, and communities. It was in 1993 that then Gov. Cecil Andrus filed the first of many lawsuits challenging the operations of the federal dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers and despite many improvements in dams and salmon habitat only a handful of the large B run steelhead made it back to Idaho to spawn last year, and only 11 natural-origin sockeye returned to Stanley Basin.

BPA's must sign new contracts with most of its customers in the next decade. But the market price of power is now below BPA's current price, and out-of-region markets for BPA's surplus hydropower are shrinking. If BPA's large customers leave BPA to pursue cheaper power, the agency's ability to meet its costs - including its public interest spending for fish and wildlife, energy infrastructure, and energy efficiency - will be at serious risk.

Andrus worked closely with the Northwest's governors from both parties to support and defend the public power system and seek bipartisan solutions for salmon restoration. So, it is fitting that the Andrus Center for Public Policy convened a forum to support current regional discussions on solutions to address energy, salmon, water, agriculture, and community needs.

The conference was designed to encourage action and discussion toward such resolution and to bring together the leaders and groups who can find and implement a long-term plan that meets everyone's needs.

Agenda

7:30 am Registration & Breakfast

8:00 am Welcome - John Freemuth, Andrus Center for Public Policy

8:20 am Opening -
Idaho Governor, Brad Little

8:45 am Salmon and Energy Panel One. Moderator: Marc Johnson

Elliot Mainzer - Administrator, Bonneville Power Administration

Jaime Pinkham - Director, Columbia River Inter - Tribal Fish Commission

Darrel Anderson - President and CEO, Idaho Power Company

Nancy Hirsh - Director, NW Energy Coalition

Michael Garrity - Senior Policy Advisor on Natural Resources, Washington Governor Jay Inslee

10:00 am Break

10:15 am Salmon and Energy Panel Two

Moderator: Marc Johnson

Giulia Good Stefani - Attorney, Natural Resource Defense Council

Roger Gray - CEO, Pacific Northwest Generating Co-Op

Bear Prairie - General Manager, Idaho Falls Power

Chris Wood - President, Trout Unlimited

Jason Miner - Natural Resources Policy Manager, Oregon Governor Kate Brown

11:30 am Lunch procession

12:00 pm Lunch Keynote - Congressman Mike Simpson (ID-R)

1:15 pm Agriculture and Communities Panel One. Moderator:
Amanda Peacher

McCoy Oatman - Vice Chair, Nez Perce Tribe

Sam White - Chief Operating Officer, PNW Farmers Co-Op Grain Division

Steve Howser - President, Idaho Water Users Association

Jeff Gordon - Gordon Wines, Pasco, Washington

Sam Mace - Inland Northwest Director, Save Our Wild Salmon

2:30 pm Break

2:45 pm Agriculture and Communities Panel Two.

Moderator: Amanda Peacher

Stephanie Solien - Co-Chair, Governor Jay Inslee's Southern Resident Orca Task Force

Merrill Beyeler - Beyeler Ranches, Lemhi Valley, Idaho & Former Legislator

Roy Akins - Chairman, Riggins Chapter, Idaho River Communities Alliance

David Reeploeg - Vice President of Federal Programs, Tri-Cities Development Council

Dustin Aherin - Lewiston resident, Businessman & Middle Fork Salmon River Outfitter

4:00 pm Closing - Elliot Mainzer, Administrator, Bonneville Power Administration

“It is at White Bird Hill that I can get steamed up over my greatest frustration in politics. The Salmon River gets its name from the hundreds of thousands of fish that once spawned in its pools, eddies and side streams. Meriwether Lewis was fed one of them by friendly Indians after staggering over the Continental Divide at Lemhi Pass into the valley of the upper Salmon.”

“In the mid-1950s, about four hundred thousand salmon returned up the Snake River system each year, most heading for such unspoiled tributaries as the Salmon, Clearwater, and Imnaha Rivers. I would picnic with my young family at Bruce’s Eddy on the Clearwater and wade into the river with hopes of hooking a chinook salmon or steelhead, the Northwest’s fighting and famously tasty species of seagoing trout. No more. The fish are disappearing from the river system.”

Cecil Andrus

“Both Mike Simpson and Cecil Andrus’ career reflected caring about getting things done, more than caring who got the credit. Simpson provided a moving eulogy for Cecil Andrus, here in this room. Mike Simpson’s work in the White Clouds was cheered on the whole way through by Cecil Andrus. I’m very confident that today, as we wrestle with the issues before us, particularly restoration of salmon, maintaining an energy infrastructure, maintaining our communities, rural and urban, and looking towards a future we can be proud of in the great state of Idaho, that Cecil Andrus is still cheering us on and cheering him on.”

Rick Johnson

“...the overall benefits to the Pacific Northwest from a thorough-going development of the Snake and Columbia are such that the present salmon run must be sacrificed. This means that the [Interior] Department’s efforts should be directed toward ameliorating the impact of this development upon the injured interests and not toward a vain attempt to hold still the hands of the clock.”

1947 Memo from Assistant Secretary of the Interior Warner W. Gardner as quoted in Nils S. Nokkentved, *To Think Like a Mountain*, Washington State University Press, 2019.

SUMMARY OF KEY CONFERENCE FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

1. Congressman Mike Simpson made a case for looking at the twin crises faced by salmon and the BPA as an opportunity: “Strangely enough, I think the challenges ... facing the BPA, also creates the opportunity for us to solve the salmon crisis. Because the reality is, you cannot write a new BPA Act – you cannot write a new Northwest Power Planning Act – without addressing the salmon issue. You can’t address the salmon issue without addressing dams, and you cannot address the salmon issue without addressing the challenges that the BPA have. They are interwoven. Perhaps, this challenging time gives us the opportunity to both address the power challenges that we face, and also the salmon crisis.”
2. Congressman Simpson called for a rewrite of the 1980 Northwest Power Act to assist the Bonneville Power Administration in dealing with the issues affecting it today, including a changed power market. “Things are changing. They’re not the same as they were 40 years ago.”
3. Idaho Governor Brad Little called for “breaching the status quo” and tasked his Office of Species Conservation to create a collaborative stakeholder group to work on Idaho-based solutions.
4. Jaime Pinkham, Executive Director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, urged attendees to also consider hatcheries, spawning habitat, and conditions in the ocean as well as dams.
5. Congressman Simpson’s remarks followed a morning session of two panels, establishing that both the salmon runs and the Bonneville Power Administration are in trouble. Changes in energy markets are squeezing the power marketing agency’s financial resources at a time when its financial obligations to mitigate the salmon effects of the Federal hydropower system have no end in sight as salmon and steelhead populations continue to struggle.
6. There was some willingness to discuss the ideas of “keeping everybody whole” if changes to the Federal hydropower system are implemented to improve salmon and steelhead migration, but there are significant details to be worked out about how such compensation or economic mitigation would be implemented.
7. Are We Ready to Come Together? It’s too soon to say, but there are encouraging signs.

KEY FINDING 1:

Congressman Mike Simpson made a case for looking at the twin crises faced by salmon and the BPA as an opportunity: “Strangely enough, I think the challenges ... facing the BPA, also creates the opportunity for us to solve the salmon crisis. Because the reality is, you cannot write a new BPA Act – you cannot write a new Northwest Power Planning Act – without addressing the salmon issue. You can’t address the salmon issue without addressing dams, and you cannot address the salmon issue without addressing the challenges that the BPA have. They are interwoven. Perhaps, this challenging time gives us the opportunity to both address the power challenges that we face, and also the salmon crisis.”

Congressman Simpson stated:

I went last year with some of my staff, up to Marsh Creek, up by Stanley, to watch a salmon come back and create its redd and lay its eggs and die. It was the end of a cycle and the beginning of a new one. These are the most incredible creatures, I think, that God’s created. It’s a cycle that God created, we shouldn’t mess with it. When you think of what these salmon go through when they came back ... I say salmon, not salmons, we saw one. One. She swam 900 miles after swimming around in the ocean for five years, after being flushed through dams and out into the ocean. She swam 900 miles to get back to Marsh Creek, increased in elevation about one and a quarter miles, all to lay her eggs for the next generation of salmon. (53)

I’m going to stay alive long enough to see salmon returned in healthy populations in Idaho. (55)

When asked what citizens and groups interested in the issue could do he said:

Educate us from your perspectives. I suspect you all have a different perspective. Come back to Washington if you’re back there and come into my ... I shouldn’t say my ... into my chief of staff’s office and sit down and let him take you through what we’ve been doing. There are an awful lot of people that go, “Oh, my God. What the heck are you doing?” and then you sit down and as we explain it, they kind of go, “You know, that makes a little sense, but our association won’t like it.” Well, go educate your association. Things are changing. They’re not the same as they were 40 years ago. Let’s think about the future. Let’s think about who’s going to inherit all this and do what we can. (59)

Congressman Simpson also offered up some concrete policy ideas that perhaps might

help create momentum towards solutions, the goal of the conference. But first he framed the issues around those solutions:

If the dams were to come out, how would you address Lewiston? If the dams were to come out, how would you address the barging issue that the grain growers have of getting wheat down the river? If the dams were to come out, how would you address the Washington farms who have concerns that they would have to lower all of their intake valves or intake pipes and everything else to be able to farm? There are an awful lot of questions that need to be asked because you need to address these if you are going to solve this problem. (54)

How do you make Lewiston whole if you're going to take out the \$1.6 million budget of the Port of Lewiston and seven or eight employees? I don't know how many there are. But that's important to Lewiston. Can you make Lewiston whole? I think so. We've got some ideas. You got Lewis and Clark State College, you got the triangle with the University of Idaho and Washington State University. (56-57)

Could you create the type of research Triangle Park that is in North Carolina right now, High-Tech, in the Lewiston area? I don't know, but believe me, we've been having conversations about it. You got the grain growers that are saying, "Hang on. It's the cheapest way to get the grain down there, and if you take the barges out, how do I know that I'm going to have a car to take my grain to Portland if all I'm seeing is Union Pacific Railroad saying, "Well, you get 100 cars, then we'll talk to you, but until then, you're a captive shipper." Could you buy a railroad line that's operated and run by the grain producers? Possible. (57)

How do you replace the 3,000 megawatts of power and how do you do it with clean energy or non-carbon energy? One of the keys was mentioned right here, SMRs. Doesn't have the same problems that large ... that the reactors have being developed in the Idaho National Laboratory. These are, like, 300 megawatt reactors. You plunk them down, they run for a long time, you pick them up and take them. There's some interest in the micro-reactors that they are talking about now. You could make the tri-cities and Hanford and PNNL the center of this stuff. What about battery storage that they're working on? You could make PNNL the leader in battery storage in this country (57).

KEY FINDING 2:

Congressman Simpson called for a rewrite of the 1980 Northwest Power Act to assist the Bonneville Power Administration in dealing with the issues affecting it today, including a changed power market. "Things are changing. They're not the same as they were 40 years ago."

As he said:

It's because in 1980, when they rewrote the Bonneville Act and created the

Northwest Power Planning and Conservation Act, they added on a whole bunch of requirements that the BPA has to pay for. In fact, the BPA was seen as the piggy bank for every program in the Pacific Northwest. They were also the indemnitor of last resort, which means if no one else will pay, either a judge or an administrative office will have the BPA pay for it. (51)

But on this this as well as related issues he made it clear that: “we got to keep our delegation from the Pacific Northwest together to the best ... to the extent we can (60)

KEY FINDING 3:

Idaho Governor Brad Little called for “breaching the status quo” and tasked his Office of Species Conservation to create a collaborative stakeholder group to work on Idaho-based solutions.

When asked about the four lower Snake River dams he responded:

That’s a hurdle for me. That’s a pretty high hurdle for me. Timing, flows, flow augmentation, the most recent agreement that BPA is doing about the timing of the flows, better survivability. Those are all things that we need to look at. (6)

Members were appointed to the collaborative group and the group’s first meeting was held on June 28, 2019. The governor describes the purpose of the group:

“Idaho has shown time after time that we are a leader in collaborative conservation efforts. I look forward to receiving the policy recommendations from my Salmon Workgroup. Together we will develop effective salmon and steelhead policy for Idaho to ensure that abundant and sustainable populations of salmon and steelhead exist for present and future generations to enjoy.” <https://species.idaho.gov/governors-salmon-workgroup/>

During the first meeting up the group there was initial confusion about whether the dams were to be considered are not. A discussion between Governor Little and the Idaho Conservation League’s Justin Hayes clarified that the dams, according to the Governor, should not be the only issue under discussion. Although vague it appears the dams are not “off the table” as it were. As the Governor said:

“The issue is if you find one issue and then spend all your time talking about it, then you don’t go to any other issue,” he said. “If you just focus on that and you don’t look at all the options around, you’re not going to get anywhere. If it’s all going to be about dam breaching, I don’t believe we’re going to get there.” (https://Imtribune.com/opinion/letters/little-launches-salmon-study-with-a-riddle/article_daa86999-9d3e-5f5b-8b7e-68397cf8d62d.html, accessed July 13, 2019).

Governor Little’s comments parallel those of Jaime Pinkham noted below.

KEY FINDING 4:

Jaime Pinkham, Executive Director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, urged attendees to also consider hatcheries, habitat and conditions in the ocean as well as dams.

Jaime Pinkham noted:

It's great to have a conversation here, but until we can get to the tipping point in Congress, I think we've got to continue to look at the alternatives, whether it's flex spill, looking at the huge predation issues that we're facing within the Columbia River system and the challenges it's facing on smolt survival. I mean, we're able to get a sea lion bill passed, that took us 15 years, to pass a sea lion bill, but it's passed and it's giving us more tools. In the meantime, until we get the political strength to really talk about the long-term future of the dams, I think we've got to continue to do a full court press on the other issues around the hatcheries and the habitat, the ocean conditions and the harvest conditions in the international waters. (12)

But, he also worried that:

I think there's still this risk that we'll have intervention from the outside who'll determine the fate of the dams. Not on the inside. And, that's my fear. (24)

KEY FINDING 5:

Congressman Simpson's remarks followed a morning session of two panels, establishing that both the salmon runs and the Bonneville Power Administration are in trouble. Changes in energy markets are squeezing the power marketing agency's financial resources at a time when its financial obligations to mitigate the salmon effects of the Federal hydropower system have no end in sight as salmon and steelhead populations continue to struggle.

BPA Administrator Elliot Mainzer, who would also provide a second keynote later in the day noted:

That status quo is changing. There's a lot happening, the energy markets are evolving, there's new technology. The demands on utility space, the demands on local communities, the agricultural sector. We're all feeling a lot of strain from a variety of different forces and so I think that, certainly, the world is moving, it's moving more quickly than it has in a long time. I think there's also that desire, you know, we talked about moving the ball forward. I think people kind of want to get out of the perennial churn of fighting and being in other sides of the courtroom and looking for a more constructive and collaborative way to work with each other. (11)

Ed Bowles, Fish Division Administrator, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, in his

introduction to Elliot Mainzer later in the day, agreed:

The past of having the conservation responsibility play out as a ball and chain on Bonneville's ability to be competitive through this purely power-focused lens has got to change and we need to rethink Bonneville in terms of this stewardship role is not only valued and important, but actually credited and a part of what they bring to bear on this dynamic issue and that's the only way I think we're going to really keep Bonneville in this important role moving forward. (106)

Elliot Mainzer, in his afternoon remarks noted that the upcoming Columbia River System Operations Review and EIS (CRSO) would be one focal point to talk about some of the issues related to salmon and energy (108). Analysis of the four lower Snake dams will be part of that review and EIS but certainty for power customers was said to be as important. (112)

Mainzer stated the key concerns from his point of view at BPA:

We need to keep evolving, but can you work with us to think about is there a way that maybe we can get some of this done that actually doesn't have additional rate impacts and also can be done in a way that preserves some of that vital flexibility of the system, especially as Washington state and Oregon are aggressively decarbonizing as California has thousands of megawatts of solar and we need that flexibility to be part of the equation. The integrating of decarbonized sources of energy into the flexibility provide by the hydro-based system was his point. (110)

Nancy Hirsh, Executive Director NW Energy Coalition, echoed that point:

We're integrating 1,000 megawatts of wind and are coming up on, across the region, almost 500 megawatts of solar. Idaho Power's an example of integrating that solar into its system. Energy efficiency is the second-largest resource serving the region, after hydropower. That, to me, shows evolution, as Elliot mentioned. (13)

There were several examples of collaborative successes - the recently completed "spill agreement" and the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. That plan, according to Michael Garrity, Columbia River/Water Policy Manager, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife:

...brought together the Yakima nation, irrigators, county commissioners,

conservation organizations, around a plan that involved really looking at how you fulfill principles, and putting away some long held positions in the process. You saw in that process irrigators supporting fish passage into places where Bureau of Reclamation dams that blocked salmon habitat for a century. And, you saw conservation organizations being open-minded to new water storage in a way that hadn't happened before. (16)

Elliot Mainzer described the success of the "spill agreement:"

... it's not a totally revolutionary concept ...Listen, when the river, when power demand is relatively modest, let's really lean in. Let's spill even more than we have. Let's go change the gas standards and raise them back up to get them up to one 120 and let's lean in on that and we'll conduct that experiment, but when the demand for power and flexibility is higher, let's back off and let's flex into that. Let's produce some revenue, provide some flexibility and load service to the market and see if we bring some revenues in, keep the rates stable and meantime give the Army Corps of Engineers who at the end of the day runs this system, an operation that they could actually implement that was consistent with all their multiple power and non-power objectives.(110)

People involved in that agreement agree to not go to court to see how the agreement was working while the CRSO process continues.

During the first panel Darrel Anderson, President and CEO of Idaho Power, pledged that:

...we are, by 2045, we strive to be 100% [clean energy, including hydropower] and from that perspective, the reason we did that, was because we were on that path. We have had a conscientious effort to move out of carbon already, we were in the process of getting out of our participation in coal-fired plants in Oregon and the coal-fired plants in Nevada. Our bigger lift is getting out of our coal-fired plants in Wyoming, but we are working with our partners there to do that. (14)

The day's second panel was full of both cautions and calls to do things differently. Bear Prairie, General Manager Idaho Falls Power, offered a note of caution:

So, I want to make sure as we talk about things like, "let's put breaching on the table". If we're going to have those type of conversations let's make sure that we understand the impacts, both physically and economically and I think that the dialogue is changing to where we can have this. (34)

Roger Gray, CEO of Pacific Northwest Generating Cooperative, outlined the growing concern for BPA:

Bonneville was so far below market for so long and that's no longer the case. They're right on the edge of being competitive or not and we have about 10 years left in these contracts and there are very serious challenges that Bonneville is addressing. (35)

Office of Oregon Governor Kate Brown Natural Resources Policy Advisor Jason Miner offered a guide as to how to approach a collaborative dialogue over intertwined uses facing the region as well as the fact that any solution had to be regional in focus:

...I do think one of the most critical aspects of creativity is thinking about how to stay true to your goals while also questioning some of the fundamental assumptions that you carry into the room while pursuing those goals. (37) I do think it's been remarkable to realize why all these multi-party, multi-interest stakeholder groups get put together. It's because state government actually isn't very good at figuring out which portion of which problem gets fixed by whom, how much, and what your percentage is that goes into that solution. (49)

Giulia Good-Stefani with the Natural Resources Defense Council echoed Miner's words:

...obviously the point is there are a lot of stakeholders in this conversation, and we need to all get together and figure out a different way because for a number of reasons, the current way is not working. It is also illegal, as was pointed out in federal court. (46)

Chris Wood, President and CEO of Trout Unlimited, reminded everyone that the salmon issue was multifaceted but the dams were key in his view:

...there will need to be changes made to how we operate the hatcheries and in how harvest management occurs and where and how we focus on habitat restoration. But I think if we want to really tackle the one issue that can make the biggest difference, it's probably the dams. (48)

Finally, we were reminded by a questioner in the audience that the panels lack voices from the next generations, something that we need to rectify at the next Andrus conference event and something governor Andrus would have tasked us to do.

Panel moderator Amanda Peacher described the heart of the afternoon panels, following Congressman Simpson's lunch address:

That's the most important political speech of any Idaho politician for 15 years (Simpson's luncheon address¹) but at the heart of it has always been communities, and I mean that in a geographic sense. We're talking about Lewiston, we're talking about the Puget Sound communities, but there are also agricultural communities, fishing communities, what we might call economic and cultural communities that have stakes in energy and salmon and water in the Columbia and Snake River basins. (66)

1 A comment made to her by Moderator Marc Johnson.

Simpson had just earlier set the stage in his remarks touching on the need for economic mitigation:

If dams were to come out, how would you address Lewiston?” he asked. “How would you address barges? How would you address Washington farmers who would have to lower intake valves to be able to farm? There are an awful lot of issues.” Because “we have an economy and a culture that’s been created around dams on the Columbia and lower Snake River systems.

KEY FINDING 6:

There was some willingness to discuss the ideas of “keeping everybody whole” if changes to the Federal hydropower system are implemented to improve salmon and steelhead migration, but there are significant details to be worked out about how such compensation or economic mitigation would be implemented.

Sam Mace with Save our Wild Salmon Coalition recalled the pledge made more than ten years ago:

We’re not going to wait until the last salmon is swimming upstream. But we did commit to working towards a solution that made sure the other stakeholders that we had been meeting with and that were my neighbors, that their needs were met. And that those investments happened. So we are very committed to that. (78)

Jeff Gordon, who started the well-known and respected Gordon Estate Wines, expressed a worry that likely is somewhat widespread by members of the agricultural community:

Well, if they breach the dams I’m gone. But, on the other hand he did say: “What I think is I think that the answers are there. I think that we have to have a very coordinated solution and everybody needs to work together. Nobody has to lose anything here. We need to do. We need to make sure that the plan that we have in place takes into consideration all elements and it’s well coordinated.” (75 - 76)

David Reeploeg, Vice-President for Federal Programs for TRIDEC, brought the concerns of the Tri-cities region to the fore, and the area’s support of the four lower Snake dams. But he noted that he had talked to various interests, understood that the issue of salmon was very important to communities of interest such as northwest tribes, but that people were perhaps still talking past one another (95). And as with many other speakers and attendees the question of certainty arose:

...what assurance do we have that if we were to make this, I guess you'd call it, sacrifice, would that solve the problem? And how do we know? Then I guess one other example of that, and Jeff's (Gordon) daughter was highlighted recently in a Seattle Times article, that I thought the author had a really interesting approach to his article. Because instead of doing an article about pro-dams and anti-dams and getting into that debate, it was really more about following some real people and people whose livelihoods and lives are directly impacted by our system. (96)

Later, as someone who lives close to Hanford National Lab, he supported the notion of small modular nuclear reactors to deal with the baseload energy question should the dams be removed (101). Rocky Barker notes that development of new battery technologies and demand response management could change the energy debate significantly, by further reducing dependence on hydropower.

As the purpose of our conference was to see if progress could be made on the issues discussed at the conference (move the ball as it were), the comments of Sam White, Chief Operations Officer, Pacific Northwest Farmers Cooperative, about compensation mechanisms or economic mitigation are especially important:

Being able to maybe buy a train, have our own train, I think that's exciting idea. We have a rail loading facility that is farther north up by Rosalia, Washington just about 30 miles south of Spokane. So, we know how to operate a train, but if there was dam breaching on the table and we could have one there. That's what it would take, but it would fix our problem. It wouldn't fix the rest of them down the river. (70) So, it's a huge investment, but our growers, that family of farmers would look at something had we been made whole, but I don't think just one train is going to do that. And you add too many more and I see problems with getting that product to and from market. 90% of the grain in Northern Idaho, Eastern Washington, and Oregon goes to feed the world of Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, Southeast Asia. We have a very specific product of soft white wheat that they love. But we also have competitors. Canada. Australia. Our farmers aren't market setters they're market takers. So, they can't just say, "Well, it's going to cost me another \$2.50 a bushel to get it to the marketplace. I'm going to just raise the prices. Our customers will go elsewhere." (70)

Tied to the notion of keeping everyone whole is asking if opportunities exist to unwind some of the current river management strategies that have impacted irrigation and water use in the Upper Snake River Basin. Steve Hauser, President Idaho Water Users Association, brought the concerns from Eastern Idaho water users who fear:

... there's "no guarantee that dam removal is going to remove the requirement for additional flows from the Upper Snake. AND we don't have salmon, right? We have Shoshone Falls between us and the ocean, and the salmon have a real tough time with that 130 foot waterfall there...It does come at considerable risk for those of us in the Upper Snake, and I think what we're worried about is, from the standpoint of dam removal, is that there's no guarantee that dam removal is going to remove the requirement for additional flows from the Upper Snake. (72) One of the things

that I would like to hear from lots of folks, and we brought this up in Nez Perce negotiations all those years ago in the In Stream Flow Coalition, we asked will you promise us that if those dams are breached no water will be required from the upper Snake River, and the answer was no, we will not promise that if those dams are breached we're not gonna come and take your water also, right? (80)

But as far as experiencing negative economic and social impacts, it is the current situation felt by the Nez Perce and other native peoples of the region. McCoy Oatman, Vice-Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Committee, began by speaking of the importance and timelessness of salmon:

If you're not aware, not only Nez Perce, but other tribal people have high cancer rate, high rate of diabetes, and the reason why is that we're not able to, on a daily basis, eat our traditional diet. A lot of times, we have to eat processed foods, and our bodies are not geared to process that. (68) Look to us as tribal people. We've been here for tens of thousands of years. Who better to know the landscape. (69) In my eyes there wouldn't be salmon still in the water if the tribe was not here. (81)

Sam Mace of the Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition was clear about the virtue of collaboration: In reference to Washington Governor Inslee's creation of a task force to study the decline of the southern Orca population she said:

And so, a couple of his recommendations among many were one to support spill; the second thing was to initiate a stakeholder process to bring Washingtonians together to talk about and study it (lower Snake dam removal). What would dam removal mean for our region? What would it mean for Eastern Washington? And ask those and have those what if conversations that Congressman Simpson was talked about in his keynote. And we're really encouraged about that, and we're not seeing it as a rehash of what that EIS process that's going on, which Congressman Simpson and I think a lot of us in this room haven't had a ton of faith in. This is to have that "what if?" If those dams come out what? Do you buy a rail line? What are the options? If those dams come out what are the ways to make sure that Mr. Gordon can keep making his amazing wine? Which I highly recommend. (78)

In one of the clearest affirmations of "making people whole" she added:

... her Coalition does not want a solution that is created on the backs of any of the folks here sitting up here with me. That's not the way that you get progress and it's just not right. (78)

KEY FINDING 7:

Are We Ready to Come Together? It's too soon to say, but there are encouraging signs.

First, people want to continue the conversations and dialogue. Second, there seems growing recognition that the stalemate in which the region finds itself stands in the way of progress. On the one hand, one set of interests have achieved a number of impressive legal victories in court, but there is acknowledgement that litigation alone is not getting the job done. As Giulia Stefani said:

...at the same time I recognize that the litigation has just not worked. We are still stuck. (33)

On the other side the interests who defend the status quo appear to be beginning to recognize that the pat answers and long-held policy positions are wearing thin, certainly with Rep. Mike Simpson.

Stephanie Solien points to Governor Inslee's Orca Task Force, which brought people together on both the plight of the Orcas and their relationship to salmon.

We had six task force meetings across the state last year, and the 49 stakeholders, the 49 individuals that are serving on the Orca Task Force, represented our state. It is tribal governments. It is the NGO community, the environmental community. It is state, local, and federal governments. It is the Washington Association of Business. It is the Farm Bureau. It is the Ports Association. It is fishermen. And all of these people have come together because we had one goal, and that is to try to work to save the orca ... But it wasn't until that mother whale swam for 17 days and a thousand miles, carrying that dead calf, that all of a sudden this issue was put on the world's front burner. (88)

The task force could serve as a way to further the larger conversation and action on dams, energy, community, agriculture, and salmon.

Other panel speakers had their own stories to tell. Rancher and former legislator Merrill Beyeler spoke of efforts on Idaho's Lemhi River that helped salmon return, with few results to date. Roy Akins spoke about how various interests responded when the Idaho Fish and Game Commission threatened to curtail steelhead fishing because of a lack of an incidental take permit from NOAA:

...we came up with an agreement that the entities that were threatening to sue our state for not having the permit helped us to come up with, and we agreed on some river closures that were areas where it was thought to maybe be believed there was more wild fish. We came up with some changes in how we fish for steelhead, things that would be easier on the wild fish to release, not taking them out of the water for photos. To encourage people to keep their first hatchery fish of the day and stop fishing to lessen the pressure on the limited number of wild fish last winter. All of these agreements ended up being made so that we could continue our year and continue our business and keep the town of Riggins alive, along with little towns along the Clearwater, and the town of White Bird, all depend greatly on winter steelhead fishing. (93).

Outfitter Dustin Aherin challenged everyone and asked the question that underpinned the Andrus conference:

Can you as the community of diverse-minded people, can you come together into a room with people from the Tri-Cities, with people from the Upper Snake Basin water users, from Salmon, from Lemhi County? Can you come together? (99)

Perhaps the words of Stephanie Solien give us hope that this conference may have, as it set out to do, created conditions for progress on the related issues of the day:

... there's been a lot of debate about the task force putting forward this facilitated stakeholder process to bring people together to talk about the future of the Snake and Columbia River, the dams, the people who live there, the impacts on those people and communities. Yet this conference has really beat us to it. But you've done it in a way that I think has brought together folks and that is, people don't feel like it's a political process. Unfortunately, maybe ours did, but it isn't. I guess, I have hope for the future, but I think it's going to take all of us, starting today as we leave here, really committing to work with Congressman Simpson and Governor Little and the Tri-Cities and the Save Our Salmon Coalition and its allies, and really trying to solve these problems. Thank you for letting me be part of it. I feel inspired to go back and I feel like we have made some headway here, and we can start working together on these issues. (105)

In 2006 the 17th Boise State University Public Policy Survey asked a two-part question to see if it was possible to change opinions of dam breaching if polices could be put in place to alleviate concerns of those who perceived that they might be harmed by breaching. Although this data is now old, it does suggest that such solutions are possible. There are plans to ask the questions again in 2019.

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