The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SNAKE RIVER DAMS

Mr. GORTON. Mr. President, Senators from the Northwest are sometimes frustrated in trying to get our message across, to deliver or reflect the views of our constituencies almost 3,000 miles away, and to let our Senate colleagues from around this country understand what it's like to live in the Northwest.

The Northwest is known for clean air and water, a high quality of life, picturesque landscapes, the beauty and majesty of the Cascade and Olympic Mountains, the rolling hills of the Palouse, lush wooded forests, sparkling lakes, a playground for backpackers, hikers and recreational enthusiasts, home of America's success story—Microsoft, the apple capital of the world, breadbasket to the nation, a vibrant salmon fishery and home of the most wonderful people who possess a zest for life and fierce instinct to preserve and protect these truly unique qualities of my great state of Washington and of Oregon, Idaho, and Montana as well.

Mr. President, I share the passion of my constituents. I consider it an honor to represent a state as great and diverse as mine. But what is often overlooked is the fact that our hydroelectric power system plays a central role in keeping Pacific Northwest a clean, healthy, and affordable place to live, work, play, and raise a family.

I have come to this floor many times to explain what makes the Northwest tick to my colleagues and to others unfamiliar with the region. And I have been frustrated or puzzled by the reaction I get when I reflect the views of my state, and in particular, my eastern Washington communities.

We have been waging a battle with this administration, radical environmental organizations, and other dam removal advocates over the issue of removing Columbia-Snake River dams.

Advocates of dismantling our Columbia River hydro system place the choice in stark terms of dams or salmon. That choice, presented in such terms, is false. The truth is that by applying adaptive management to our hydro system, we can and will preserve endangered salmon runs and our valuable hydro system.

I reject the false choice of salmon versus the Columbia hydro system. I believe passionately that we can and will restore a vibrant salmon fishery to the Columbia and that we can do so within the confines of the hydro system.

To an outsider, one would think the administration has the momentum. Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt has been a roll—tearing down dams from the California coast to Maine in the Northwest.

Incidentally, however, we may be a new ally in Vice President ALBERT GORE. While he has been known as a removal advocate, last week, in order to get a photo opportunity on the Connecticut River, he had a dam release some 4 billion gallons of water in order that he could go cancoeing. Perhaps now we have found a new use for dams and a new ally in the Vice President, as long as we can offer him canoeing activities by releasing water.

Most of us in the region believe we have the facts and support on our side to defeat those who wish to remove the Snake River dams and thereby destroy a central piece of the Northwest economy and a way of life for millions of Northwesterners.

I have asked myself—What do we have to do?

We can have thousands rally to ''Save Our Dams''—as we did in eastern Washington and Oregon communities earlier this year.

We can have our local, State, and Federal officials unite in their opposition to dam removal, and we have added Governor Gary Locke and Senator MURRAY to the ranks of those opposed to removing our eastern Washington dams.

And we can have scientists, federal agencies, and even environmental groups point to global warming as a major cause for salmon decline.

We can have the National Marine Fisheries Service scientists tell us, in a report released April 14, that the chance of recovery for a few distinct salmon runs is only 64 percent if all four lower Snake River dams are removed, as against 53 percent by continuing to transport smolts around the dams—a difference that is barely statistically significant.

And we can have recent media reports tell us that the ''Outlook is bright for salmon runs this year.'' In this July 12 Seattle Times article, scientists and biologists are predicting a potential rebound in salmon stocks in the Pacific Northwest. And the reasons they cite are: improved ocean conditions, better freshwater conditions, and cutbacks in fishing.

But still we hear the dam removal clamor from national environmental groups and bureaucrats in the Clinton-Gore administration. And we have an energized Interior Secretary who in his words has been ''out on the landscape over the past few months carrying around a sledgehammer'' giving speeches saying ''dams do, in fact, outlive their function'' and ''despite the history and the current differences over dams, Babbitt said he believes change is inevitable.'' (Trout Unlimited Speech, CQ, July 17, 1999)

Here I am again, to share some compelling statistics recently released by the Army Corps of Engineers that further prove that removing dams in eastern Washington would be an unmitigated disaster and an economic nightmare.

Ten days ago, the Corps released three preliminary economic studies that will be included in an overall Lower Snake River Juvenile Fish Migration Feasibility Study set for completion later this year.

The Corps studies quantified the economic impact of the removal of the four Snake River dams as removal relates to the region's water supply, navigation, and power production.

I simply cannot overstate the importance of these studies and what they mean for the future of the Pacific Northwest, its economy and the livelihood of our families and communities.

That is why I was surprised when there was little attention paid to the release of these three studies. I can remember that as recently as March of this year when the Corps was preparing to release a study on recreation benefits involving the four lower Snake River dams, environmental groups including the Sierra Club, NW Sportfishing Industry Association, Trout Unlimited, and Save Our Wild Salmon were tremendously successful in getting the media's attention and substantial coverage of their claims that removing the four Snake River dams would bring a $300 million annual recreational windfall to the region.

The environmental groups leaked the $300 million number knowing that the study was incomplete, but the false information made big news. Then, the report was completed and the truth was told. In fact, the real number, according to the Corps report is: ''Under the natural river drawdown alternative, the value of recreation and tourism then increased to $129 million annually, which represents an increase of about $67 million per year.''

Why did this report, with complete analysis, receive so little attention:

I am again surprised at the lack of attention given to the results of the latest three studies, which standing alone, send such a clear signal to this administration, radical environmental groups, and dam removal advocates everywhere that they should abandon their cause.

Let me share these numbers with you:

First, starting with power production:

The economic effect of breaching on the region's power supply would be $251 million to $291 million a year.

Residential bills for Northwest families and senior citizens would increase $1.50 to $5.30 per month.

But the region's industrial power users, which rely on cheap power to provide thousands of jobs can see a monthly increase ranging from $387 to $1,326. Our aluminum companies would see an increase in their monthly bills ranging from $222,000 to $758,000.

If the Snake River dams are breached, how would we replace the 1,231 megawatts the dams produce annually? Keep in mind it takes 1,000 megawatts to serve Seattle. The answer is, there is no cheap alternative. We can increase power production at thermal power plants or build new gas-fired combined-combustion turbine plants.

Finally, these power estimates wouldn't be complete without reminding my colleagues that last month the Administration sought to collect at least $1 billion beyond normal power costs to create a 'slush fund' to fund the removal of the four Snake river dams. I was delighted to pass any amendment prohibiting the Bonneville Power Administration from raising rates on Northwest power customers for a project they don't even want.

Second, lets look at irrigation.

The Corps report assumes that there is no economically feasible way to continue to provide irrigation to the 37,000 acres of farmland served by the four Snake River dams. The report assumes 37,000 acres of farmland will be taken out of production as a result of breaching those dams.

What does this loss of water supply mean for eastern Washington?

The loss of irrigated farmland would cost $9.2 million annually.

The cost to retrofit municipal and industrial pump stations would be $.8 to 43.8 million a year.

The cost to retrofit privately-owned wells would be 43.9 million annually.

In light of these sobering statistics, what options would be left for irrigators? The Corps estimated the economic effect on dam breaching on farmland value would amount to more than $134 million. The Corps also considered ways to alter the irrigation system in order to continue to irrigate the 37,000 acres—to accomplish this alternative, we would have to spend more than $291 million—more than the value of the land. Our farmers and agricultural communities are struggling enough as it is, and removing their ability to even water their crops puts them beyond despair. Therefore, the Corps assumes this irrigated farmland will disappear.

Lastely, let's look at transportation:

The Corps studied transportation impacts of breaching the four Snake river dams.

The transportation costs resulting from breaching the four Snake River dams would rise to $1.23 per bushel from .98 cents per bushel—a 24 percent increase.

The annual increase in transportation costs to the region would be $40 million for all commodities.

Breaching the four dams would remove 3.8 million tons of grain from the Snake River navigation system. Of this 3.8 million, 1.1 million would move to rail transportation and 2.7 million tons would move to truck transportation.

According to the report, barge transportation of commodities on the Snake river limits the cost of rail transportation and truck transportation. Removing competition among these types of transportation could drive up costs. According to the report, barge transportation has saved, on average, $5.95 in per ton when compared with other transportation alternatives. ''Disturbing this competition would be one of the most important regional consequences of permanent drawdown.''

According to the Washington State Legislative Transportation Committee, additional costs resulting from road and highway damage range from $56 million to $100.7 million.

Further, it is important to note that the navigation system of the Columbia allows enough barge transportation that if it were destroyed, more than 700,000 18-wheelers a year would be added to our already congested state roads and highways to replace the lost hauling capacity. (Source: Pacific Northwest Waterways Association)

I want to put all this together and construct a picture for you and what this scenario would mean in eastern Washington.

In exchange for breaching or removing the four Snake river dams, here's what the citizens of the Pacific Northwest could get:

We would lose four dams that produce hydro-power, which emit no pollutants into the air, for a thermal based power source that would jeopardize the clean air unique to the Northwest and enjoyed by countless residents and visitors to our state.

The 37,000 acres of irrigated farmland in Franklin and Walla Walla counties and the hundreds of employees that help supply food to more than a million people would disappear.

There is a likelihood that there would be a temporary loss of water for well users after dam breaching due to the inability to alter well depths until the actual removal of dams.

The increased truck traffic on our roads to haul wheat and barley to coastal ports will have an adverse effect on air quality and impose an additional financial burden on the family farm, which for many would be too much to bear and force them to give up their land.

So what do we get by removing the four Snake River dams? Shattered lives, displaced families and communities who will have seen their livelihoods destroyed, generations of family farmers penniless, industries forced to drive up consumer costs, air pollution, a desert that once bloomed with agriculture products goes dry, a far less competitive Northwest economy and a Northwest scrambling to repay a BPA treasury debt with less revenue, and scrambling to buy or build higher cost polluting sources of power.

So according to these three latest studies, the bottom line is that if we breach the four dams to increase our chances of bringing a select number of salmon runs back by only 11%, the Northwest will suffer economic impacts of $299 to $342 million a year in perpetuity. This staggering figure doesn't even include the estimated $1 billion it would take to actually remove the dams.

If we remove the Snake river dams, over the next 24 years we only improve our chances of recovering spring and summer chinook to the survival goals set by NMFS by 11 to 30 percent over the current system of barging. Over 24 years, NMFS would like to reach the survival standard of returning 150 to 300 spring and summer chinook to the Snake River tributaries each year.

But there is something else that these numbers, studies and data can't quantify:

What many outside the region don't understand is that the four dams on the Lower Snake river are part of our life, heritage, and culture.

I repeat the call I issued last month to the administration and dam removal advocates: abandon your cause and work with the region on cost-effective salmon recovery measures that can restore salmon runs and preserve our Northwest way of life.

Mr. SCHUMER addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New York.

Mr. SCHUMER. I ask unanimous consent for 5 minutes in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. SCHUMER. Thank you, Mr. President.

TAX CUTS

Mr. SCHUMER. I wish to continue the line of discussion we were in before about these two alternative tax cut plans. Again, my greatest worry is not in how the pie is divided, although I certainly very much disagree with the Republican way that is done but, rather, in the overall strength of our economy.

To put a huge tax cut in place now, at a time when inflation is low, unemployment is low, and jobs are being created, has the potential of throwing a monkey wrench into our economy. Targeted tax cuts, things aimed at helping middle-class people with their big financial nuts, whether they be health care or college tuition or retirement—those make some sense. But a huge across-the-board tax cut, in my judgment, could throw the economy dramatically off kilter. Will it? No one can predict. But there is an old expression: If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Our economy has been moving along well, and now, I think mainly because of some ideologues, we are being pushed to do something that risks the great recovery we are now having. That is issue No. 1.

Issue No. 2 is saving Social Security and Medicare. Again, you cannot have the money go for everything. Despite CBO's awful statements in the last few days—and I will talk about those in a minute—when you have a dollar, you can use it for something. You can return it to the taxpayers, you can spend it on a program, or you can put it away for some kind of obligation that might occur later.

The two great obligations we have to the American people, fiscally speaking, are Social Security and Medicare. If you look at this chart, the Republican plan takes that Social Security surplus and makes it a deficit from 2005 on.

How many Americans, for a quick tax cut—most of which they will not