



Hydropower Threats in the PNW

Mid-West Electric Consumers Association Annual Meeting

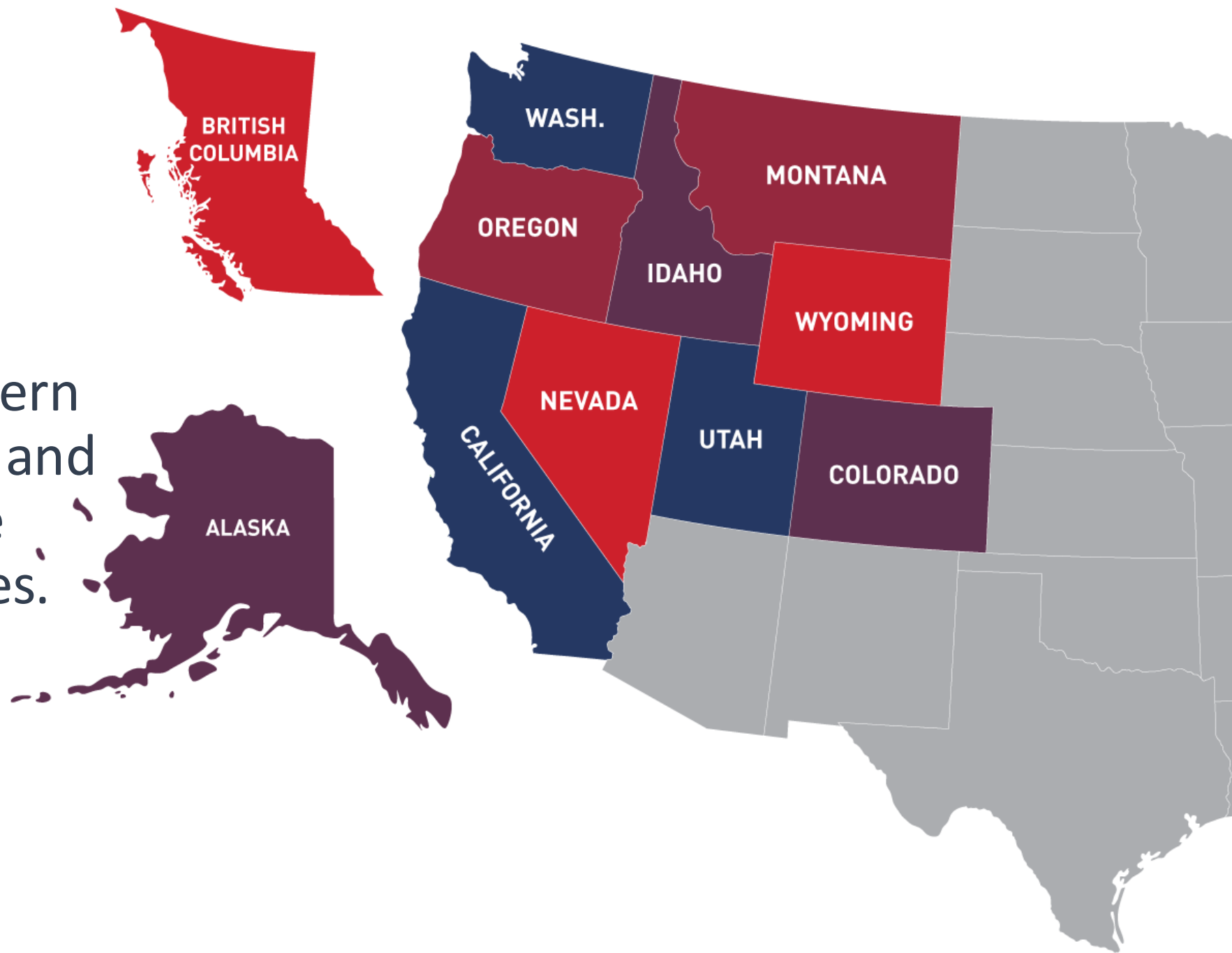
December 10, 2025



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Training • Advocacy • Information

We represent **155**
public power
consumer-owned
utilities in 10 Western
states and Canada and
over **400** Associate
Member companies.



Three Service Areas



TRAINING

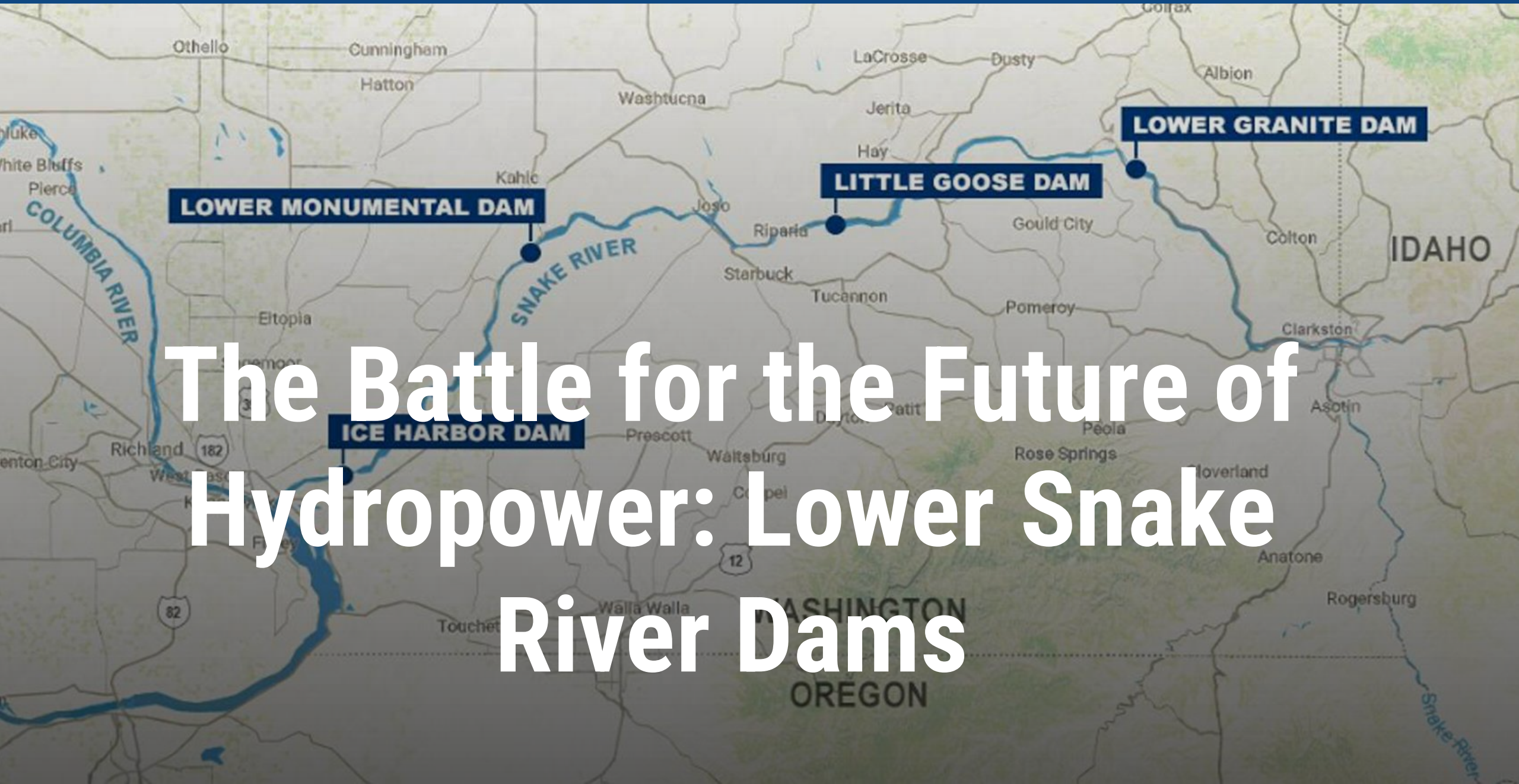
Workforce
Development

ADVOCACY

Legislation
Regulation

INFORMATION

Communication



The Battle for the Future of Hydropower: Lower Snake River Dams

Lower Snake River Dams

Downstream (Tri-Cities, WA)

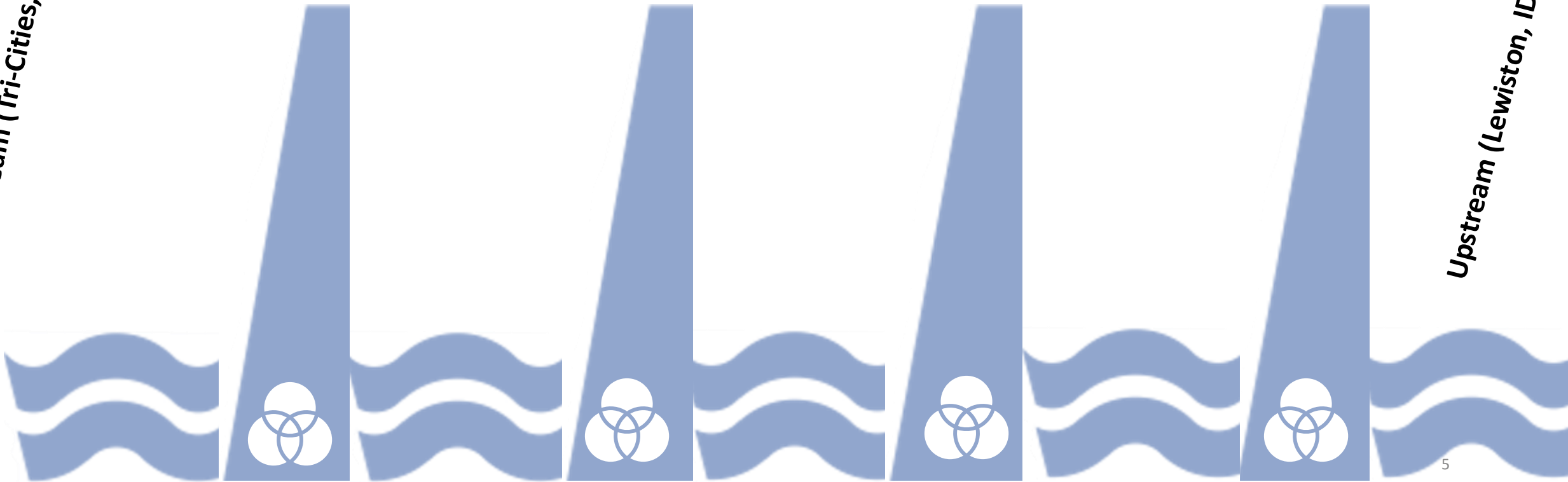
Ice Harbor

Lower Monumental

Little Goose

Lower Granite

Upstream (Lewiston, ID)



Losing the Lower Snake River Dams?

Losing the LSRD means losing...

3000 MW of CO₂-free generation
10% of the nation's wheat export capacity
48,000 acres of irrigated farmland

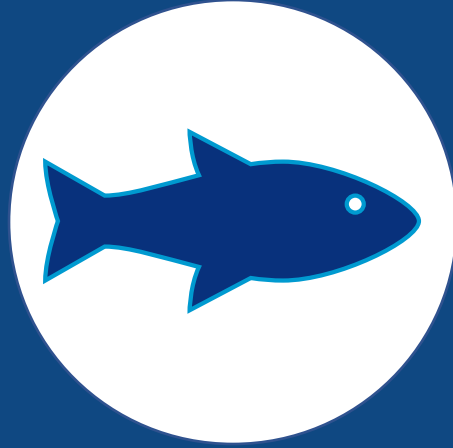
Losing the LSRD means...

Increasing electricity costs by 40%






Dam Breaching Efforts



Salmon?

West Coast Chinook Salmon Smolt-to-Adult Returns

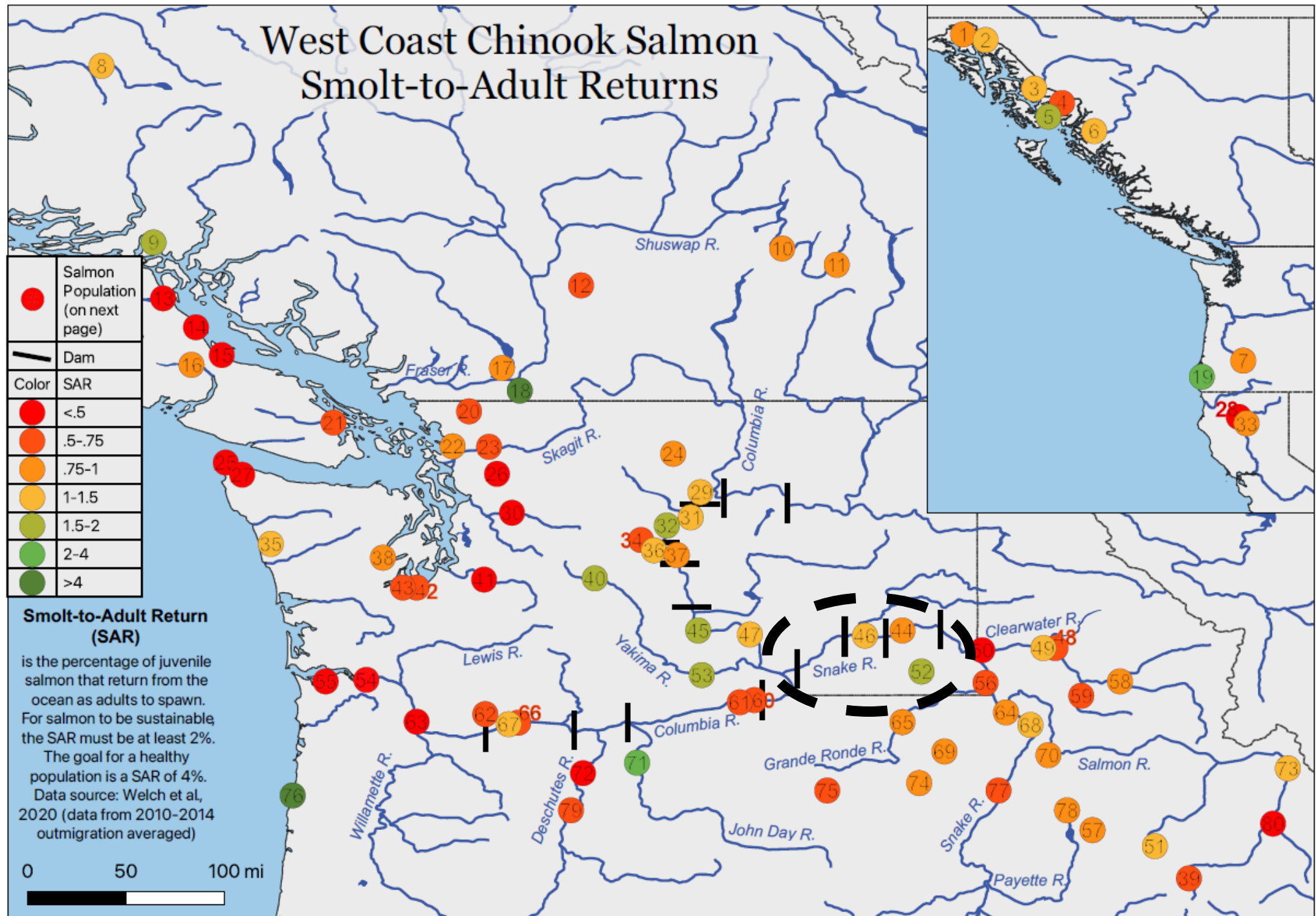
●	Salmon Population (on next page)
	Dam
Color	SAR
●	<.5
●	.5-.75
●	.75-1
●	1-1.5
●	1.5-2
●	2-4
●	>4

Smolt-to-Adult Return (SAR)

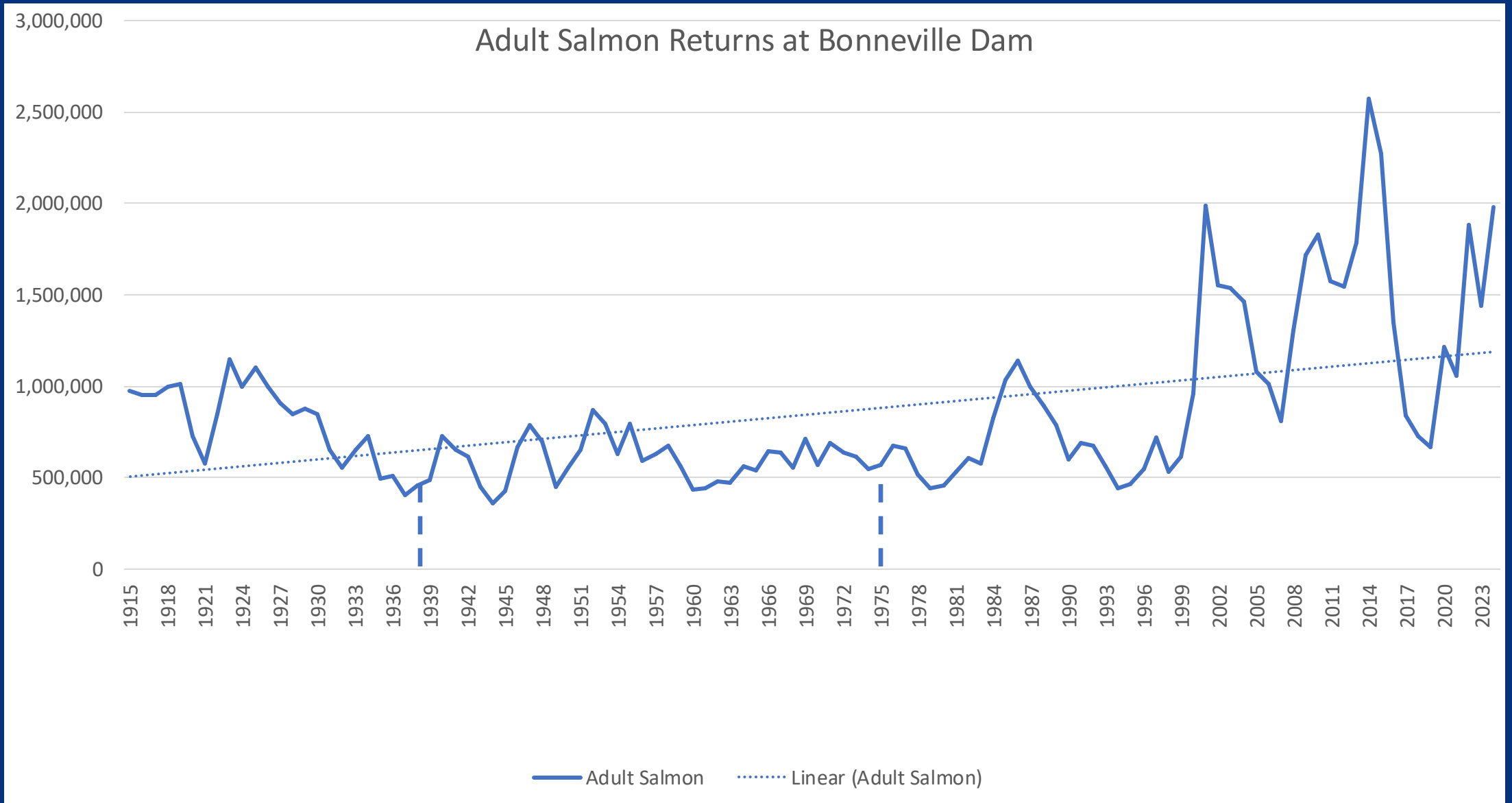
is the percentage of juvenile salmon that return from the ocean as adults to spawn. For salmon to be sustainable the SAR must be at least 2%.

The goal for a healthy population is a SAR of 4%.
Data source: Welch et al, 2020 (data from 2010-2014 outmigration averaged)

0 50 100 mi

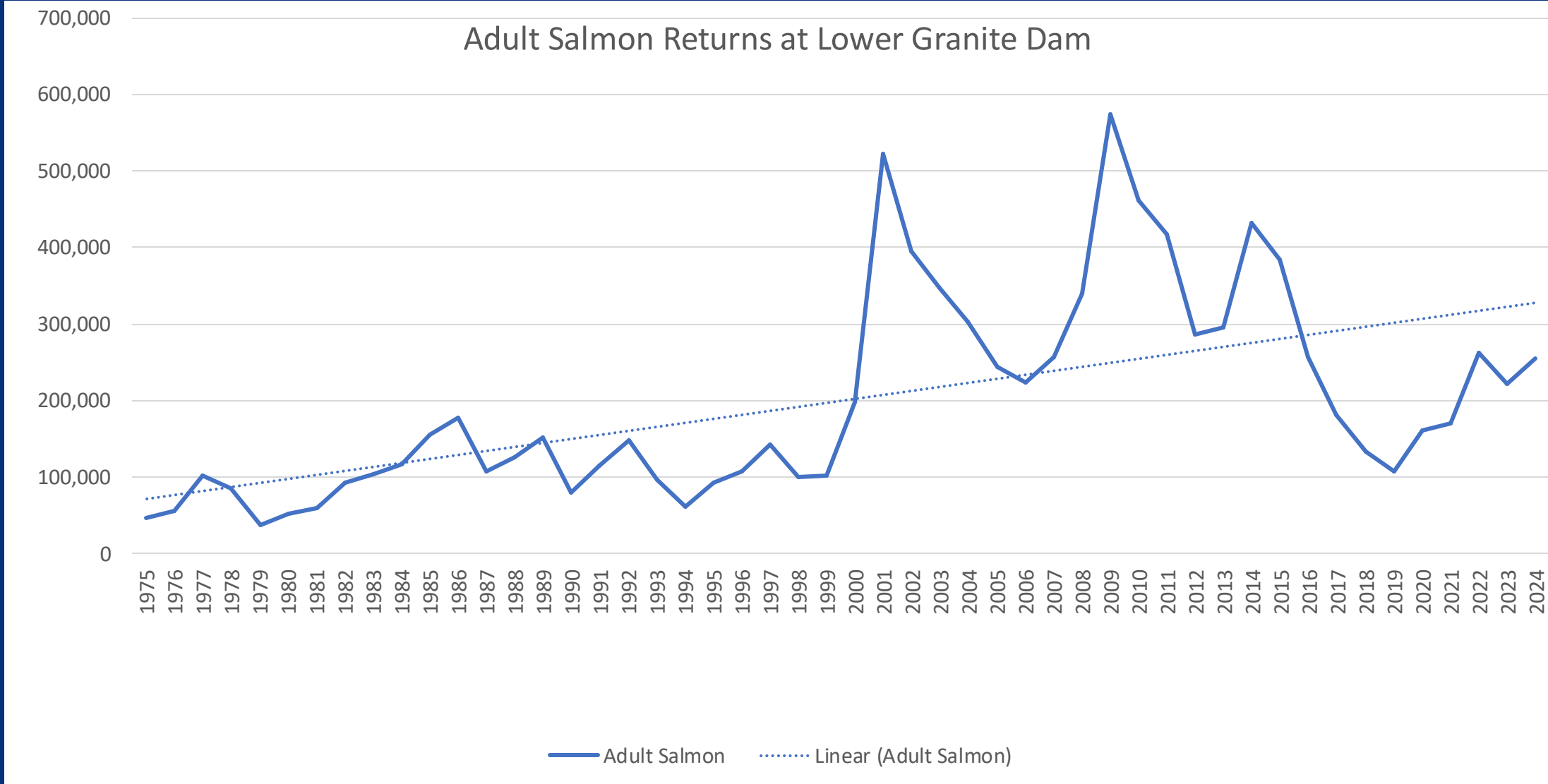


Improving Columbia River Basin Salmon Returns



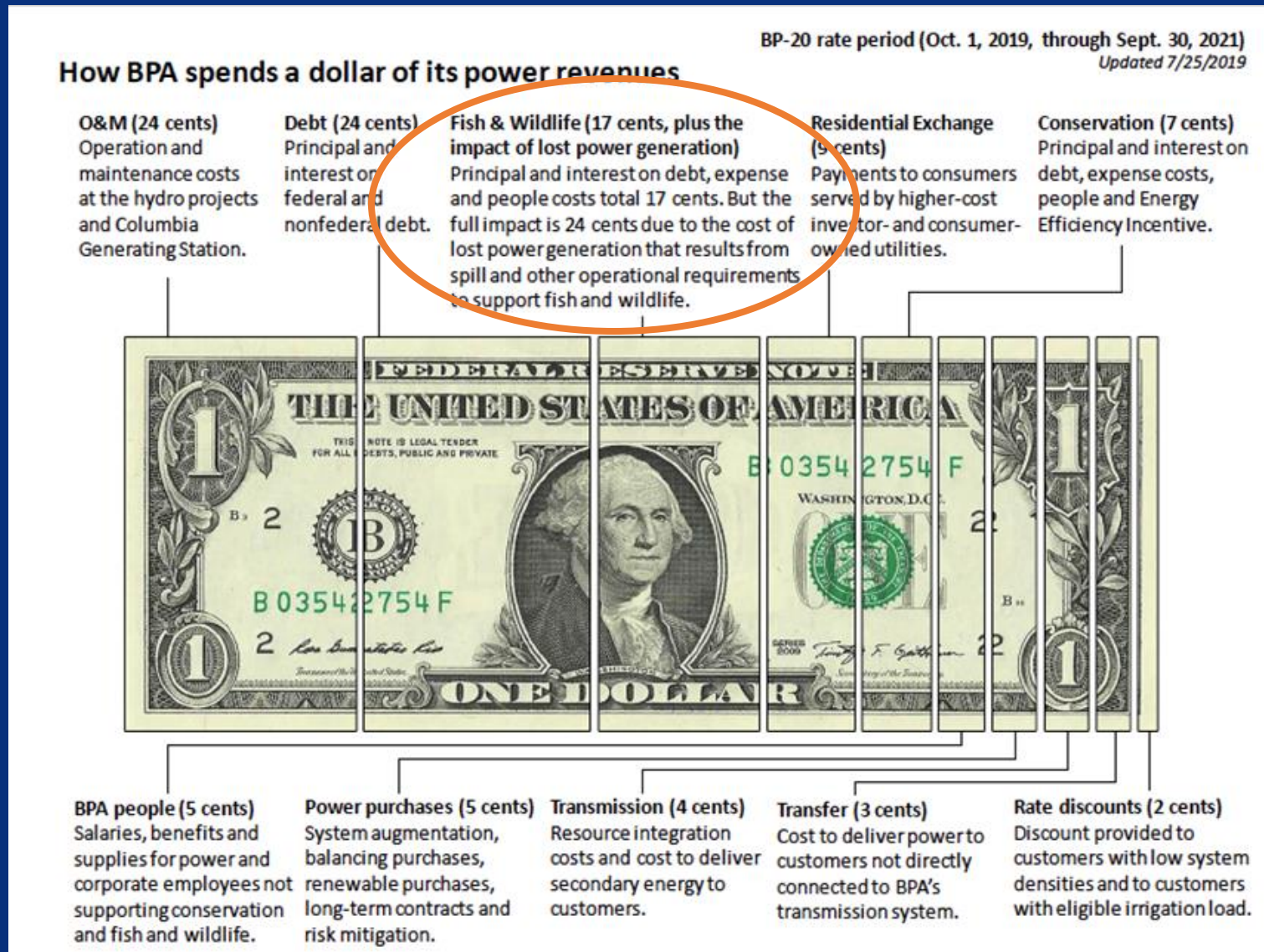
1915-1937 estimates courtesy of BPA. 1938 – 2024 from UW DART

Improving Snake River Basin Salmon Returns

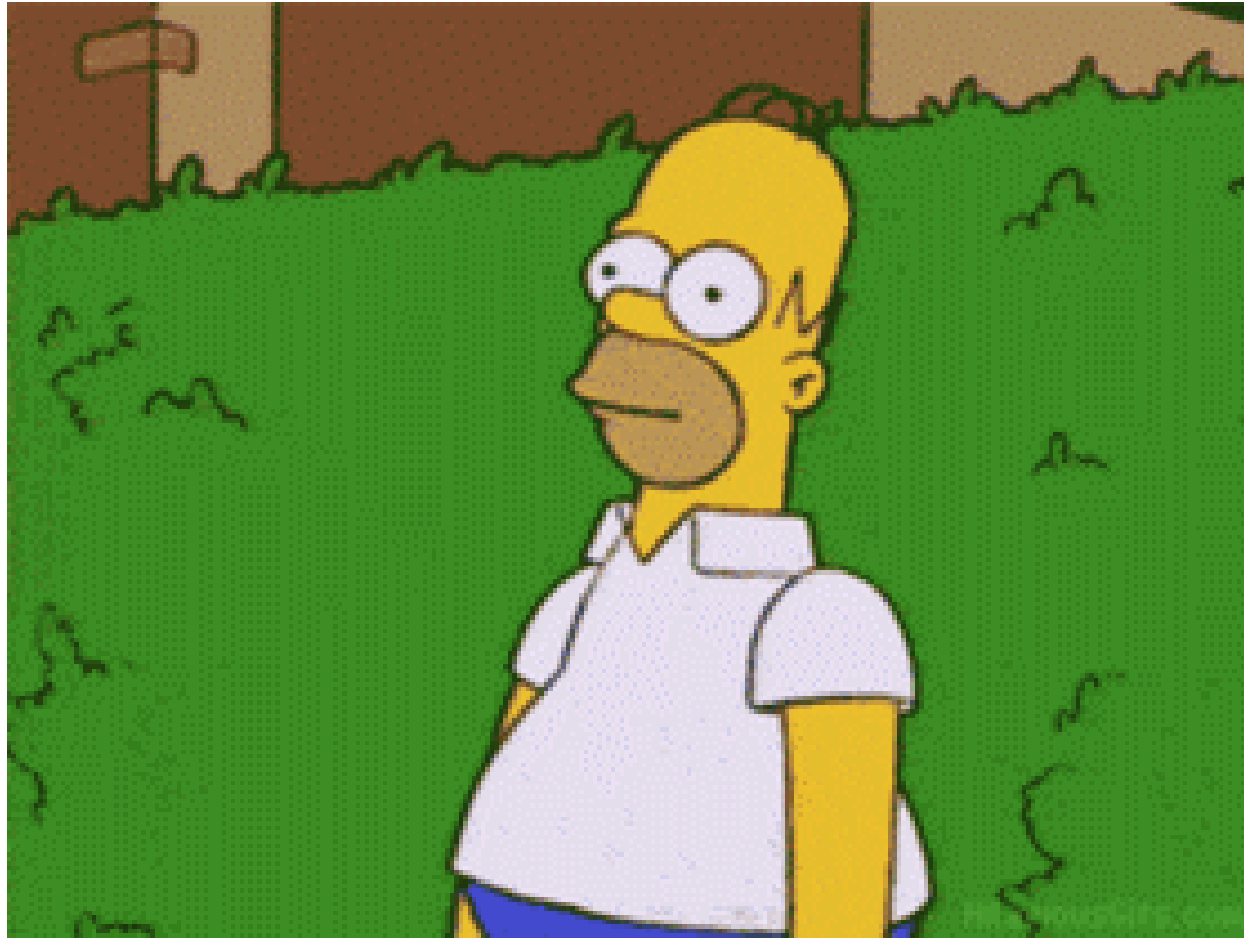


Data from University of Washington DART

BPA Supports Major F&W Program



Warning: Political Statements Ahead



Lower Snake River Dams

Biden Appointees

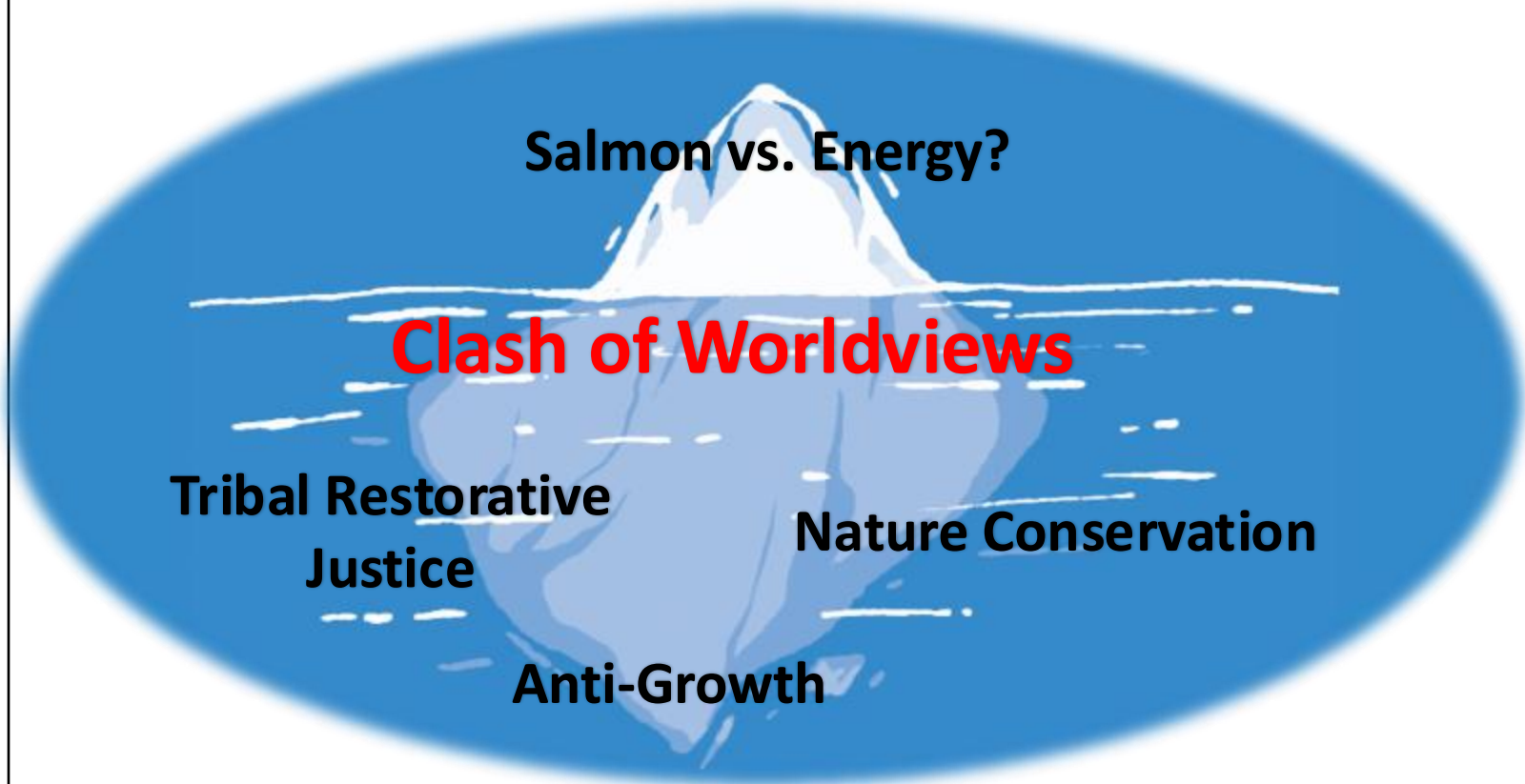
US Department of Interior:
Sec. Deb Haaland

US Army Corps of Engineers:
Assistant Secretary for Public
Works, Mike Connor

USACE: Principal Deputy
Assistant Secretary: Jamie
Pinkham

NOAA Senior Advisor: Zachary
Penny

US Parks Service:
Charles Samms





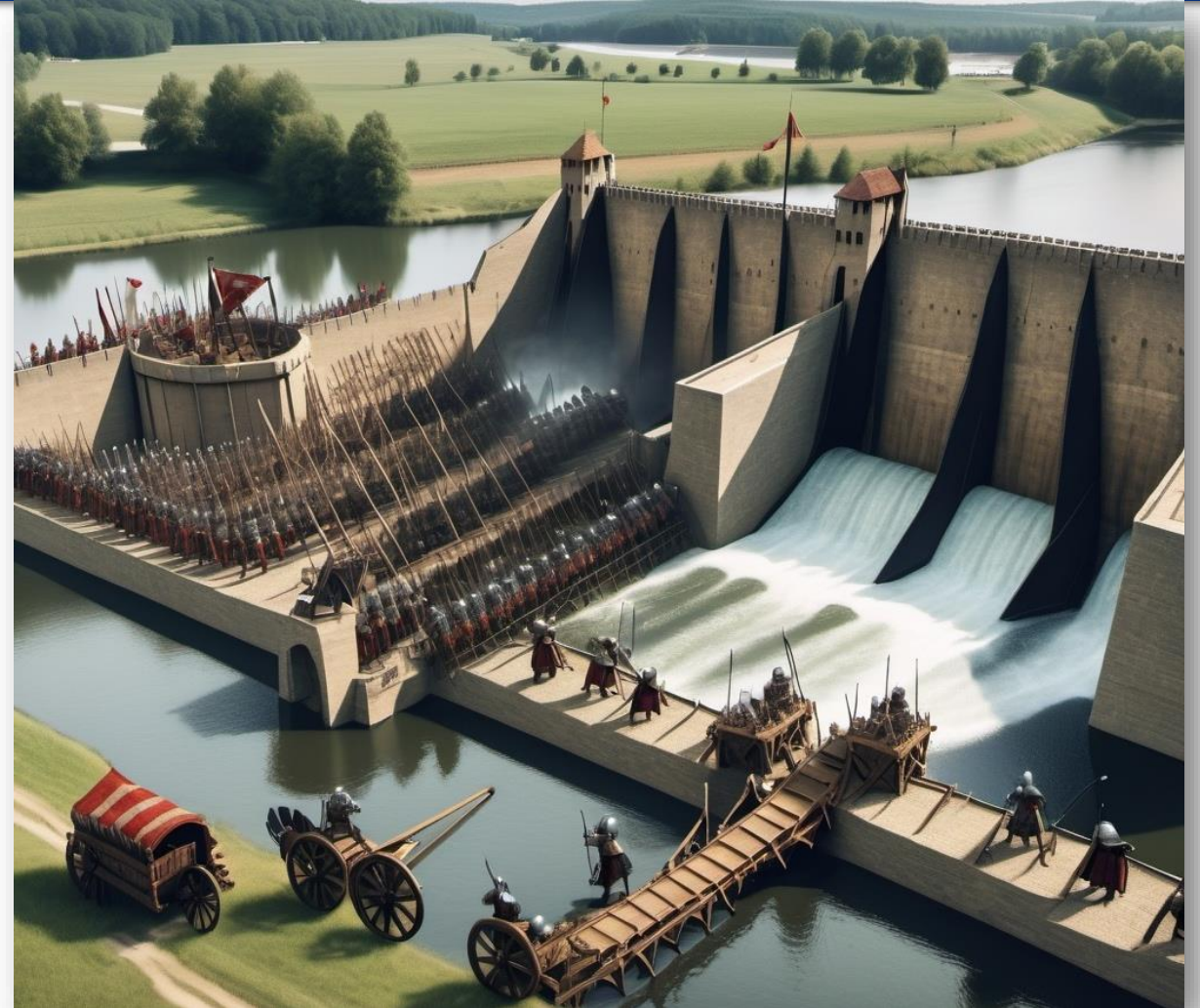
Politics

The \$1.6 Billion Funding Challenge

Huge amounts of advocacy dollars are spent each year to persuade policymakers to eliminate productive hydropower resources.

Organization	Assets	Annual Revenues	Combined Assets + Revenues
Natural Resources Defense Council	\$467,000,000	\$263,000,000	\$730,000,000
Earthjustice	\$247,000,000	\$147,000,000	\$394,000,000
Sierra Club	\$130,000,000	\$167,000,000	\$297,000,000
Trout Unlimited	\$31,000,000	\$66,000,000	\$97,000,000
American Rivers	\$17,500,000	\$17,000,000	\$34,500,000
Idaho Conservation League	\$7,500,000	\$3,300,000	\$10,800,000
Columbia Riverkeeper	\$4,200,000	\$3,000,000	\$7,200,000
Northwest Energy Coalition	\$1,400,000	\$1,200,000	\$2,600,000
Save Our Wild Salmon	\$250,000	\$470,000	\$720,000

Lower Snake River Dams Under Biden Administration



Biden Admin's Pathway to Breaching



"The Administration commits to exploring lower Snake River habitat restoration opportunities, including but not limited to migration corridor restoration through breaching the four lower Snake River dams."

Sep 2022:
CEQ-Sponsored
Negotiations
Begin

Sep 2022:
NOAA
"Rebuilding"
Report
Finalized

Mar 2023:
President
Biden Calls for
"Abundant &
Harvestable"

Jun-Dec 2023:
Public Power
Utilities Frozen
Out of
Negotiations

Dec 2023:
Biden Admin
Announces
"10-year
Settlement
Agreement"

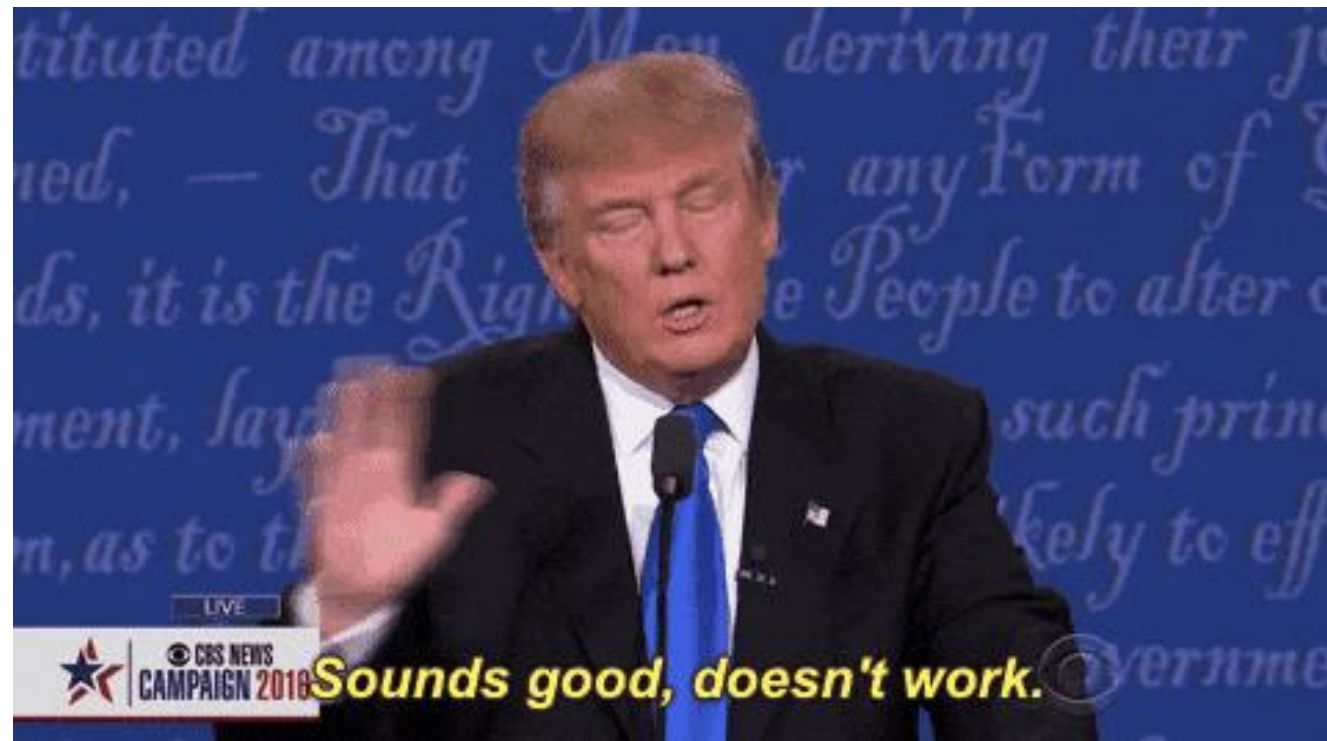
Jun 2024:
DOI Tribal
Circumstances
Analysis Calls
for New Non-
ESA NEPA
Standard

Nov 2024:
Plans for
Environmental
Review
Announced

Dec 2024:
SEIS Notice of
Intent Issued

Under Trump Administration, Dams to Get a Temporary Reprieve

Dam Breaching?



Trump Administration Opportunities



Address Supplemental EIS



Make Determination re: 12/14 Agreement



Litigation



Develop New “Foundational Documents”



Back to the Courtroom

June 2025: Trump Administration Announces Its Withdrawal from MOU

July 2025: Trump Administration Withdraws Notice of Intent for SEIS

October 2025: State of Oregon Files Motion for Injunctive Relief

December 2025: Defense Filings Due

Late December 2025 – January 2026: Court Reviews Filings and Schedules Hearings

What Can We Do?

- Speak with a Unified Voice
- Leverage Our National Associations
- Work with Our Regional Policymakers
- Think Beyond 3 Years!
 - Build More & Stronger Coalitions
 - Look for Tribal Partnership Opportunities



NOW IS THE TIME TO TALK, NOT FIGHT OVER HYDROPOWER AND SALMON



The electric grid is at a crossroads, facing mounting challenges: extreme weather, escalating wildfire risks, surging demand, and ongoing policy uncertainty. Each one threatens the affordability and reliability of electricity for homes, schools, farms, and businesses. Yet, the greatest risk to the region's non-profit utilities—and the people we serve—may come from renewed efforts to undermine our clean-energy hydropower system, especially the federal dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers.

Recently, Governors Ferguson and Kotek asked a federal court to lift a stay on hydropower litigation. Their decision, made without consulting the utilities that power millions of Northwest homes, reopens an old and divisive fight. It's troubling because the stakes could not be higher.

Hydropower provides roughly half of all electricity in the Pacific Northwest and is our single most important resource during weather emergencies like those we faced in 2021 and 2024. At the same time, nearly 9 in 10 Western residents say they are worried about electric affordability.¹

Those concerns are well-founded. Between 2022 and 2023, retail elec-

tric rates climbed more than 5% in Washington and over 11% in Oregon. The past year was even harsher, with Washington residential rates jumping 12.6% between May 2024 and May 2025.² Removing the lower Snake River dams would add billions more to customer bills, according to every credible estimate.³

The cost doesn't stop at electricity. Breaching the dams would also devastate river navigation. Each year, millions of tons and billions of dollars' worth of agricultural goods and other products move through this federally authorized system, connecting the Pacific Northwest and the Midwest to global markets. Barging provides the cleanest, most efficient, and most sustainable link between our inland farmers and the rest of the world.⁴

But this debate is not only about energy and transportation. Salmon are central to the culture and traditions of Native American tribes and remain a shared symbol of identity across the region. At the same time, it's important to remember that salmon populations experienced steep declines before the first federal dam was built in 1938. Overfishing in the late 1800s reduced Columbia River salmon returns⁵ to fewer than

half a million by the time Bonneville Dam was constructed.⁶

The brighter news is that, thanks to decades of investment—funded through utility rates and supported by partnerships among states, tribes, utilities, and the Bonneville Power Administration—that number has more than tripled.⁷ While returns are not at pre-19th-century levels, this progress underscores what collaboration can achieve.

Now is not the time for endless litigation or renewed calls for dam breaching. Both would drive up costs for families and slow our transition to a clean-energy future. Instead, we urge Governors Ferguson and Kotek to sit down with utilities that serve millions of Northwest residents.

We are ready to work together on solutions that protect salmon while preserving reliable, affordable, carbon-free hydropower.

The choice before us is simple: we can fight old battles, or we can build new partnerships. The future of our communities, our salmon, and our clean energy system depends on choosing the latter.

Sincerely,

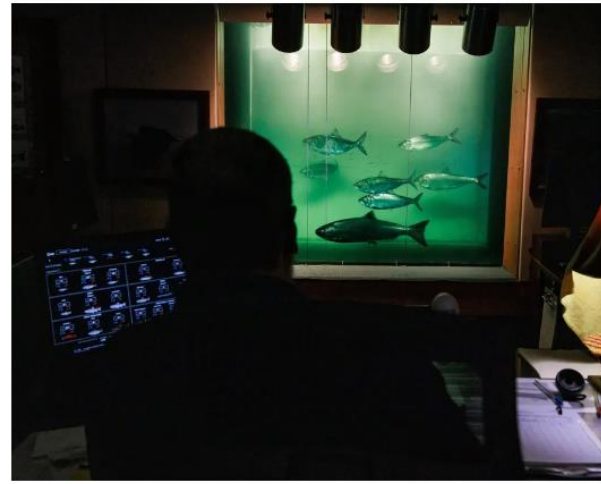
The Seattle Times Opinion LOCAL BIZ NATION SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT LIFE HOMES OPINION | THE

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Opinion

BPA's approach to salmon deserves credit

Aug. 21, 2025 at 3:31 pm



The Bonneville Power Administration's leadership and investment in salmon recovery have helped the Columbia Basin achieve important environmental pressures, writes the author. Pictured are... (Erika Schultz / The Seattle Times, 2024) More >

By Kurt Miller

Special to The Seattle Times

A recent Seattle Times op-ed ("BPA plan puts progress on clean energy and salmon recovery at risk," Aug. 7) misrepresents the Bonneville Power Administration's contribution to salmon recovery, suggesting that BPA's

Litigation isn't a salmon plan — it's a threat to ag's backbone

Gov. Kotek and Gov. Ferguson are at a crossroads: will they undermine our clean hydro infrastructure, or will they collaborate with stakeholders to balance our region's energy and economic needs with salmon recovery efforts? This critical question has come to the forefront as these two Pacific Northwest states, along with other plaintiff groups, recently asked the Oregon District Court to lift the pause on a decades-long legal battle over the operation of the Northwest's federal hydropower system.

Oregon's past legal actions have already cost Northwest ratepayers hundreds of millions of dollars in higher electricity rates and made the electric grid less reliable. Four years ago, Oregon filed a motion for injunctive relief that would have added hundreds of millions of dollars more annually and increased the risk of blackouts for the region's electricity customers. While those efforts did not come to pass, there is evidence that Washington state may soon join Oregon in resurrecting this misguided strategy.

For farmers, ranchers, and food processors — whose operations depend on consistent and affordable electricity — this is not an abstract concern. It's a direct threat to their ability to operate and compete.

Electricity is the back-

GUEST VIEW

Kurt Miller



bone of agriculture. From irrigation pumps and cold storage to processing facilities and transportation networks, the sector is one of the most energy-dependent in the Northwest. When electricity prices rise or reliability falters, the ripple effects are immediate and severe. Crops spoil, livestock suffer, and rural economies grind to a halt.

The region's electric grid is already under strain, and that strain is growing. Severe weather, data center growth, population growth, and electrification of buildings and vehicles have created greater demand. Meanwhile, clean energy mandates are forcing the closure of fossil fuel plants faster than renewable replacements can come online. And those replacements — typically wind and solar power — only provide power intermittently, which adds to the challenge.

This is truly an energy emergency in the making according to multiple electric reliability watchdog groups.

What's most frustrating is the lack of engagement with the agricultural community, the utilities, and their customers on the litigation decision. The State of Oregon



The Lower Monumental Dam on the Snake River.

Courtesy Bonneville Power Administration

and State of Washington have gone out of their way to accommodate anti-hydropower interests but have excluded others who don't share their point of view. Public power's customer advocates have yet to be granted an audience with the governors of either state to discuss the matter, despite the criticality of the issue.

Also frustrating is that this all comes in the context of evidence that electric customers' investments in salmon recovery

are working. We are currently seeing three times the number of returning adult salmon to the Columbia River Basin compared to when the first federal dam was built in 1938.

Across the region, utilities are partnering with tribes, states, local governments, conservationists, and agricultural stakeholders to improve fish passage, restore habitats, and modernize hatchery infrastructure — all while preserving the clean energy backbone of the Northwest.

The future of the Northwest's energy system — including the fate of the Lower Snake River Dams and other critical infrastructure — must be decided through inclusive, data-driven dialogue. That means engaging with farmers, ranchers, rural utilities, and the communities they serve.

We stand ready to participate in that dialogue. The question is: Will our governors join us?

To Governor Kotek and Governor Ferguson: pause the litigation and open the

door to collaboration with the rural stakeholders you represent. Let's build an energy future that supports agriculture, continues the region's excellent salmon recovery efforts, and serves all Northwest residents.

The stakes are too high for anything less.

Kurt Miller is the CEO & Executive Director of the Northwest Public Power Association which represents 154 not-for-profit utilities across 10 Western states and British Columbia.



Sources
1 Northwest Power & Conservation Council: Power Supply — www.nwpcouncil.org/energy/energy-topics/power-supply/
2 API Dashboard — U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) — www.eia.gov/spotdata/forecasts/electricity/retail.asp#data
3 2023 WSP Pulse Report Reveals American Electric Grid Concern — www.wsp.com/en-us/news/2025/pulse-report-energy-reveals-american-power-grid-concerns
4 US Electricity Profile 2023 — U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) — www.eia.gov/electricity/state/
5 Higher electricity costs hit Washington state as data center demand booms — www.seattleu.com/local/news/2025/08/12/washington-utility-bill-increase-electric-grid-energy-demand
6 Murray Indus. Process Recommendation.pdf — <https://giswmc.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/Murray%20Indus%20Process%20Recommendations.pdf>
7 WCCIC — U.S. Army Corps of Engineers — <https://indi.aps.usace.army.mil/wccic/2023/region/2023/region/1800>
8 10 2022 final report 2007-2019.pdf — <https://www.nationalwaterinstitute.org/files/2016/10/2022-2019-final-report-2007-2019.pdf>
9 Oregon History Project: decrease_of_salmon.pdf — https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/media/uploads/decrease_of_salmon.pdf
10, 11 Oregon of Washington DART Adult Passage Counts Graphs & Text — Columbia Basin Research — www.cbr.washington.edu/dart/bjwry/salut_graph_text

Paid for by Northwest Public Power Association, Northwest River Partners, Public Power Council, Inland Ports and Navigation Group, and Washington Association of Wheat Growers.

Questions and Commentary?



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