



RECREATION ON A FREE-FLOWING LOWER SNAKE RIVER:

Outdoor opportunities, quality of life would greatly improve after dam removal

Removing the lower Snake River dams could make the area a world-class recreation destination, from the confluence of the Snake and the Columbia rivers in Washington state all the way up into the upper Salmon River Basin in central Idaho. New fishing, hunting, boating and camping opportunities would abound in what would become the largest salmon stronghold in the lower 48 states. With restored riverfronts and new nearby recreation, an improved quality of life for the cities of Lewiston and Clarkston could attract more families and new businesses.

Some of the benefits of a restored lower Snake River would be:

RELIABLE SALMON AND STEELHEAD FISHING:

In 2001, Idaho had its first recreational salmon fishery in years. Even 2001's limited salmon and steelhead season netted \$203 million for the state's economy. Removing the lower Snake River dams would open over 6,000 miles of river and stream habitat to salmon and steelhead, and would help make an even more lucrative fishery a regular occurrence. A 2005 [study by Ben Johnson Associates](#) estimates that restoring Snake River salmon and steelhead just to the levels of the 1950s would generate \$544 million per year for Idaho's economy – over \$200 million of which would go to rural river communities.

Significant increases in the sport-fishing economies of Washington and Oregon (worth a combined \$1.7 billion in 2001) would be likely as well. Restored Snake River salmon runs would allow fish managers to lift tight restrictions on Columbia River fishing currently in place to protect the weak Snake River salmon stocks that mix with the Columbia's much healthier Hanford Reach salmon stocks.

OTHER RECREATION AND TOURISM:

The opportunity to once again experience a free-flowing lower Snake River would draw people from around the nation. While some limited recreational activities, such as sailing and motor boating wouldn't be feasible on a free-flowing lower Snake, nearby reservoirs on the Clearwater and Columbia rivers would still offer plenty of opportunities for these boaters. All told, the following activities are estimated to bring an additional \$310.5 million in non-fishing recreational income per year, according to a 2000 study for the Army Corps of Engineers – that's about 10 times the economic value of current reservoir-based recreation on the lower Snake. Activities other than fishing would include:

☒ Boating and kayaking:

Before the lower Snake River dams were built in the 1960s and 70s, the lower Snake River had more than 60 named rapids. Dam removal would allow new jet-boating, canoeing, kayaking, and rafting opportunities along 140 miles of newly restored river.

☒ Hunting and wildlife-watching:

Before the dams were built, the lower Snake was home to tens of thousands of game birds like pheasant, quail, chukar and partridge, as well as larger game animals such as deer. Dam removal would boost now-depleted wildlife populations by allowing for the restoration of important riverside habitat.

☒ Hiking, camping and other tourism:

Restoring the lower Snake River will breathe new life into the surrounding landscape, creating new possibilities for activities like hiking, biking, camping and photography. The Snake River Basin offers over 68,000 square miles of public lands. Restoring the Snake, the artery of this great public resource, could make the basin one of

the most exciting recreation destinations in the country. The dam removal and restoration effort itself could prove to be a tourism opportunity, as people are drawn to witness and learn about this historic event.

QUALITY OF LIFE:

Harder to quantify, but no less important, is the improved quality of life offered by a free-flowing lower Snake River. Cities like Lewiston and Clarkston would enjoy new riverfront development opportunities on a more natural riverfront. These communities would no longer be separated from the Snake River by levees that would otherwise need to grow ever taller as Lower Granite reservoir filled with sediment (bridges would eventually need to be raised for the same reason). This improved quality of life would draw new businesses and residents to Snake River communities, help keep existing residents in town, and help increase property values.