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17 June 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Stacy Horton, Washington State staff

SUBJECT: Presentation on the Washington Lower Snake River Dams Stakeholder Engagement Report

BACKGROUND:

Presenters: Jim Kramer, Kramer Consulting and Michael Garrity, Energy, Water and Major Projects Division Manager, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

Summary: In the fall of 2018, Governor Jay Inslee's Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force received hundreds of public comments about removing or breaching the lower Snake River dams (LSRD) as a way to provide more salmon for Southern Resident orcas to eat. While the task force did not have adequate time to fully consider all the issues raised by commenters, they did recommend a separate engagement process.

In response to this recommendation, the Washington State Legislature provided funding to the governor's office in the 2019-21 operating budget:

...to contract with a neutral third party to establish a process for local, state, tribal and federal leaders and stakeholders to address issues associated with the possible breaching or removal of the lower Snake River dams in order to recover the Chinook salmon populations that serve as a vital food source for Southern Resident orcas.

The Washington State Governor's Office hired a contractor team of Kramer Consulting, Ross Strategic, and White Bluffs Consulting to provide neutral facilitation and evaluation services; to convene and meet with local, state, tribal, federal leaders, and stakeholders; and to collect public comment. The outcome of their work was a report, informed by local, state, tribal, and federal leaders, stakeholders and public comment, summarizing the impacts from potential breaching or removal of the LSRD as well as from retaining the dams. Governor Inslee supported this process to hear from diverse voices and collect the range of views in Washington State in regard to the Lower Snake River Dams. He used this information in crafting some of his recommendations to the draft Columbia River Systems Operations Review Environmental Impact Statement.

The final draft of the [Lower Snake River Dams Stakeholder Engagement report](#) is available on the Governor's website as of March 12, 2020.

While there are significantly different perspectives on dam removal or retention, and the issues are complex and energetic, the report suggests a willingness for more informed and respectful conversations about this issue.

Lower Snake River Dams Engagement

- Recommended by the Orca Task Force
- Funded by the 2019 Legislature

Lower Snake River Dams Engagement

Based on existing public information, stakeholder and tribal interviews and public workshops:

- Summarize views of Washingtonians on retaining or breaching the LSRD.
- Inform Governor Inslee for his input to the federal hydro system process
- Capture stakeholder and tribal recommendations for progress
- Acknowledge and respect the values of different interests

Process

- Interviewed over 90 stakeholder and tribal leaders
- Researched past reports and publications
- Held public workshops on Jan. 7th, 9th and 13th attended by over 700 people
Workshops informed written comments, not oral testimony
- Draft report released December 20, 2019 and comment period ended January 24, 2020
- Online survey received over 8,000 responses, 2000 written comments
- Final report to Governor Inslee March 6, 2020

Report Topics

- Ecological/Salmon/Orca
- Energy
- Agriculture
- Transportation
- Recreation
- Economics
- Moving Forward



Environmental Changes and Salmon

- Free flowing river to series of slack water reservoirs
- Dams along with other factors affect salmon returns
- Salmon returns fluctuate but overall are a fraction of historic numbers
- Dams along with other factors affect salmon returns
- Significant investments in salmon recovery already
- Perspectives differ on how river would respond to breaching and on results from breaching for salmon and orca

Evolving Energy Environment

- Extremely complex, dynamic and changes in future
- Transition to clean energy
- BPA contracts up for renewal
- Total power needs, flexibility and reliability
- Differing perspectives on the significance of dams and the ease of replacing their contribution

Agriculture and Transportation

- Complex relationship between grain producers (farmers), cooperatives, transporters, exporters and customers
- Globally competitive market: quality, price, reliability and timeliness
- Complex system of truck, barge and rail
- Trends in use of barge and rail
- Mode of transportation location and infrastructure dependent
- Reliability and flexibility critical to cost and timeliness for grain and other products
- Value of irrigated vs dry land farming

Recreation

- Current system supports water recreation (boating, swimming, fishing)
- Numerous parks operated and supported by local, state and federal agencies
- Cost for new recreation facilities and their operation
- Differing perspectives on the value of current recreation in contrast to free flowing river

Economics

- Two comprehensive economic studies: 2002 USACE FS/EIS and 2019 ECONorthwest
- Economics updated in new federal EIS
- Would require shift or infusion of new funding to address impacts of breaching
- There are differing perspectives on the economic impacts to local communities, state and region, due to shifts in recreation usage, employment, and transportation.

Workshop Panel

- Included 10-11 stakeholders: farming, transportation, salmon recovery, energy and tribal
- Concerns in regard to how the issues have been dealt with over the years regarding the Snake River dams, salmon, orca, energy, agriculture, transportation, or recreation.
- What would be helpful in moving forward
- Demonstrated the kind of civil dialogue needed

Panel Members – Order Left to Right

Dave Johnson – Nez Perce Tribe

Alex McGregor – McGregor Company

Joel Kawahara – Commercial fisher and Washington Trollers Association

Kieran Connolly – Bonneville Power Administration

Deborah Giles - University of Washington Center for Conservation Biology and Wild Orca

Rob Masonis– Trout Unlimited

Rob Rich – Shaver Transportation

Nancy Hirsh – Northwest Energy Coalition

Blaine Meek – Irrigation Farmer AgReserves

Dustin Aherin - Idaho River Adventures

Moving Forward

- Participants wary of the cycle of study, lawsuits and court decisions
- Hope and despair about what comes next
- Participate in federal process
- Decisions in a larger context and consider a longer timeframe
- Future processes need to demonstrate respect and support for tribes, eastern Washington and coastal fishing communities

Next Steps

- Washington State's Comments to Federal EIS
- Future Dialogues