

2003 mainstem comment

Washington Trollers Association
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Doug Fricke, President

Dear Planning Council:

Being 'direct economic' stakeholders and Washington State's oldest industry, ocean salmon trollers (commercial fishermen), appreciate the opportunity to share meaningful response to the recommendations. For too long, our expertise has been excluded from meaningful discussions and the decision-making process pertaining to our great salmon resource and our livelihood.

When analyzing the responses of the water users and power suppliers there is a failure to recognize that a coastal economy centered around salmon even exists. The "we are the only ones who count" attitude sacrifices fish to meet power production needs and commercial fishing families to save dams. The Plan that has been put forth compromises productive salmon stream flows and water quality. The picture painted is more of the same - a salmon-less Columbia River. To quote Einstein, "We cannot solve problems with the same kind of thinking that got us there." And that is the current mindset engulfing this Plan.

The recommendation of the water users discusses the benefits of harvest reduction without mentioning that ocean harvest off the Washington coast is currently at less than 10% of historic levels and in 1994 there was no ocean harvest of salmon off the coast of Washington. Twenty years of harvest reductions have not reversed the downward spiral of anadromous salmon and steelhead stocks in the Columbia River. Any further limitations on harvest will have little or no effect on the long-term status of listed Snake River salmon populations. We are in favor of more liberal caps on Snake River impacts. After all, why should commercial ocean fishermen forego their livelihood - letting the salmon pass through only to find their home river lethally lacking in streamflow and water quality? With the vast majority of anadromous fish

stocks being killed in-river, the water users are the real villains when it comes to harvest.

Our response to the recommendations from the governmental agencies (The Plan)

Salmon do not respond well to political agendas. We ask that the Council's recommendations mandate all Columbia River users adhere to existing law, i.e., the Clean Water Act. Salmon literally have been studied to death. Utilities and government agencies with strong conflict of interest have a pattern of financing selective research that basically finds what they want, much to the detriment of the salmon. Any recommendation put forth by any governmental agency must put all users on a level playing field. Commercial fishermen for too long have shouldered the majority of the burden. We urge that the recommendations set the example for all of us - not the minimum standard, but the highest attainable goals in salmon recovery. Failing to meet minimum salmon recovery goals, everyone downstream suffers - especially the salmon. Failure to provide for the salmon lessens the quality of life in the Northwest for all residents.

As the Mainstem Plan is shaped, the "share the pain" or "let's all bleed a little together" philosophies can no longer apply to the Coastal fishing communities as they have no more blood to give. Just tour the Coastal commercial fishing communities of Ilwaco, Westport, La Push and Neah Bay. When what is undertaken upstream negatively affects the quality of life for those on the coast, there is a moral obligation to level the playing field so one group does not benefit at another group's expense.

Finally, it has been the philosophy of the commercial fishing industry to ask hard questions and work for innovative, reasonable solutions. However, it is unreasonable to think that any industry including the commercial fishing industry can make changes overnight as we have been forced to do in the past without subsequent and equitable settlements.

Sincerely,

Greg Mueller
WTA Communications Board Member

I got a call from Jim Likes on Monday August 6th. He wanted to make comments on a couple of Council issues. I don't know what the deadlines are (or were) but thought I would write down his comments and pass them on to you. First his name and address:

Jim Likes
2326 Vista Ave SE
Olympia, WA 98501
1-360-352-5971

1. He wanted to comment on the idea of pursuing a more mathematical approach to demand forecasting. He is all in favor of it and suggests that we spend more money on model development. He says we need an unbiased approach to demand forecasting and that we should go further and assess the value of "de-growth" (or reducing our demand). He also suggested buying farmland that is currently being irrigated and making it a wildlife refuge.
2. On the issue of natural gas, he suggested that distributed generation was a good idea and that we should try a pilot demonstration.

He is willing to write his comments if necessary.

Thanks, John Fazio