

## League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Port of Whitman County

Date: 02/04/21

Observer Reporting: Carolyn Joswig-Jones

Length of Meeting: 1' 20"

**Members Present/Absent:**

**Commissioners:** Karl Webber (District 1)  
Kristine Meyer (District 2)  
Tom Kammerzell (District 3)

**Staff:**

Joe Poire - Executive Director (ED) Brenda Stav - Finance Director  
Kara Riebold - Chief Operating Officer (COO) Sarah Highfield - Communications Director  
Debbie Snell - Properties & Development Manager  
Seth Woolson, counsel from Chmelik, Sitkin & Davis Attorneys at Law

**Others Present:** James Darling – Port consultant presenting Petrichor overview

WPPA (Washington Public Port Association)  
POWBAC (Port of Whitman Business Air Center – airport in Colfax)  
PIP (Pullman Industrial Parks East and West)  
PNWA (Pacific Northwest Waterways Association)  
NWRP (Northwest River Partners)  
SWEDA (Southeast Washington Economic Development Association)  
USACE (United State Army Corps of Engineers)  
RCW (Revised Code of WA)

**Business pertaining to League Positions or topics of interest:** (See below for full report of meeting)

- **ID Congressman Simpson is releasing a Dam Breaching Plan with a \$32 Billion Fund tomorrow, Feb 5<sup>th</sup>. The Port is very much in opposition of this plan stating much of it points to changes in WA but not so much in ID. There may be opportunity for public comment?**
- Petrichor LLC continues to grow broadband within Whitman County and neighboring counties.
- Port makes alternative plans for the Snake River Family Festival dated for May 22.
- Palouse Knowledge Corridor (PKC) is asking the Port to become a supporter along with WSU, IU, Whitman County and Latah County.
- Port to seek help from lobbyist Rick Desimone, former chief of staff for Senator Patty Murray, to have a voice in preparing a near future broadband funding opportunity.

**To view Meeting Agenda, Minutes and all supportive materials** follow this link:

<https://portwhitman-web.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/meetings/agendas/2021-02-04/2021-02-04%20Agenda.pdf>

Port of Whitman County Commissioners Meeting took place via Zoom and teleconference. The Port is back to all online meetings since Governor proclamation. Port staff, if in the office were behind closed doors.

**Commissioner and Staff Updates:**

Comm Kammerzell reported helping to write a letter from Pacific Northwest Waterways Association to the Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association to discourage them from “flipping sides” on their stance to supporting the **breaching of 2 dams** in response to an environmental impact statement. This letter includes signatures from 25 entities like IPNG(?), Washington Association of Wheat Growers, WA of Grain Growers, and McGregor to name a few.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

### **Employee Manual Revision**

Commission adopted to revise Port Employee Manual to offer supplemental benefits to Port employees to supplement the benefit paid by Washington Paid Family Medical Leave.

### **Legal Counsel**

Commission approved Chmelik, Sitkin & Davis Attorneys at Law as legal counsel to the Port for a one-year appointment.

### **Petrichor**

James Darling, consultant for the Port, and Ms Riebold, Port COO, presented an assessment of Petrichor's Contract/Management to the commission. They spoke to the performance of Petrichor and of the **Port's investment and involvement in broadband**. Basically, Petrichor is a fruitful investment that is bringing critical infrastructure to Whitman County and is helping other ports by "blazing the trails" in broadband. At almost the midway point of the first 3-year commitment, it is projected to continue to bring revenue to the Port and will bring value to the citizens of the county with telecom connectivity, services, and partnership opportunities.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

### **2021 Snake River Family Festival**

The staff proposed an alternative plan to this usual in-person festival which was scheduled for May 22, 2021. It may look something like this: "The first 500 people to register for the 2021 festival via an online form would receive a coupon for free ice cream and a festival goodie bag at the Boyer Park & Marina convenience store, redeemable throughout the month of May." This plan will still encourage people to enjoy Boyer Park safely.

### **Palouse Knowledge Corridor (PKC)**

Commission approved to move forward to gather information on what is involved with becoming a supporter of PKC for an annual requested amount of \$25,000. Commission would like to see a proposed budget from PKC to show deliverables and a scope of work for use of funds requested.

Washington State University: \$37.5K/yr committed for 3 years

University of Idaho: \$37.5K/yr committed for 3 years

Whitman County: \$10K/year committed for 2 years

Latah County: \$12K/year committed for 1 year (They have been consistently investing since the formation.)

### **Federal Lobby Request**

There is a **Federal broadband funding opportunity** that will be rolled out in the next few months and the Port wants to request having a voice in the rule making process and designing of the program. The commission approved for staff to seek help from lobbyist Rick Desimone, former chief of staff for Senator Patty Murray.

### **Snake River PNWA**

ID Congressman Simpson is releasing a Dam Breaching Plan with a \$32 Billion Fund tomorrow, Feb 5<sup>th</sup>. The Port is in opposition of this plan and is working on making a statement to attach to a press release that the PNWA has in the works. Attached below are Simpson's plans in part, Infographs and messages in response to Simpson's plans which were provided by Comm Kammerzell via the Port.

## **Upcoming Meetings**

- Spokane Ag Show (Pacific Northwest Farm Forum), February 23-25 (revised date) via Zoom
- Pacific Northwest Waterways Association Inland Empire Regional Meeting, March 2 via Zoom
- Pacific Northwest Waterways Association Mission to Washington, March 15-18 via Zoom

These are the first two pages of a PDF which contains screen shots of the plan presentation that Comm Kammerzell provided. If interested I can send you the full PDF with 19 slides.

# COLUMBIA BASIN FUND

**\$32 Billion Fund**

**Included in Stimulus/Infrastructure Bill  
(fully appropriated/vested up front)**

**Washington Post 1/8/21**

## **Biden assembling multitrillion-dollar stimulus**

*"Biden is also likely to push for a **larger legislative effort later in 2021** after the initial stimulus package. That effort is expected to **focus on spending trillions of dollars on infrastructure and clean-energy jobs**. The former vice president additionally has pushed for significant overhauls to America's health-care system, something that could also be wrapped into legislation later in the year."*

**DOE Administered**

## **Columbia Basin Fund Special Administrator**

Shall administer and disburse funds. Confirmed by Senate

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## **BREACHING 4 LOWER SNAKE RIVER DAMS**

**REMOVING EARTHEN BERMS AND SEDIMENT  
\$1.4 B**

**Army Corps Contracting**

**Physical Concrete Structures Remain (Mothball Status)**

**Sediment Removal and Disposition Prior to Breaching**

**All Related Federal Regulations, Reviews and Permits Waived and Expedited (excluding safety)**

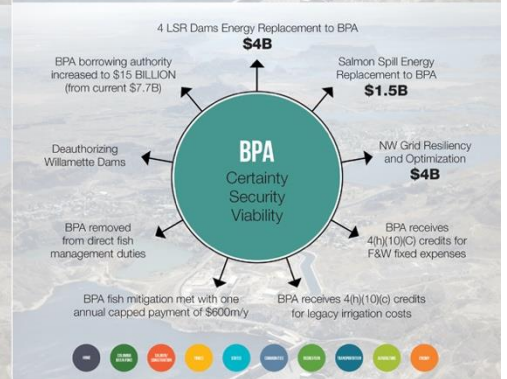
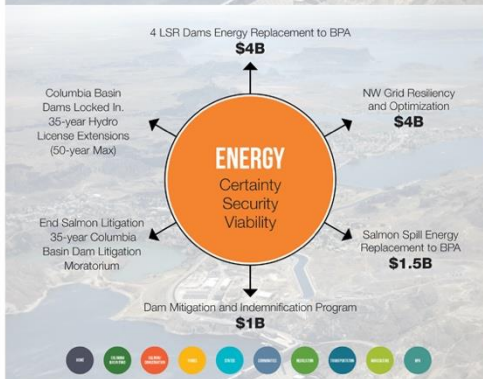
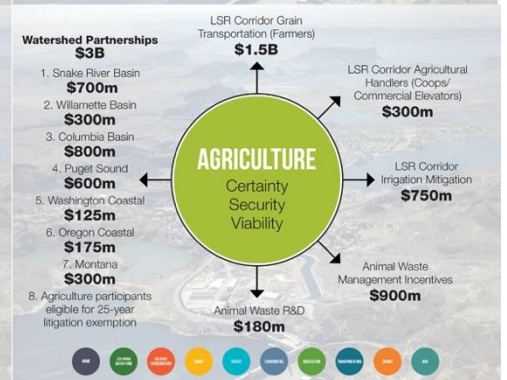
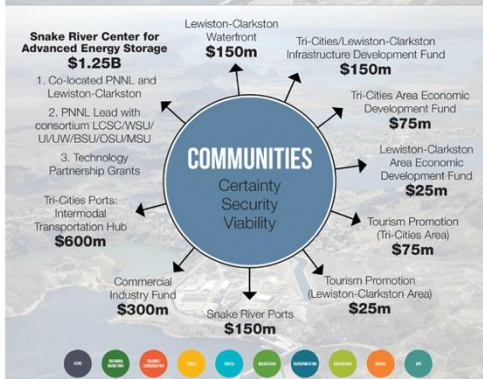
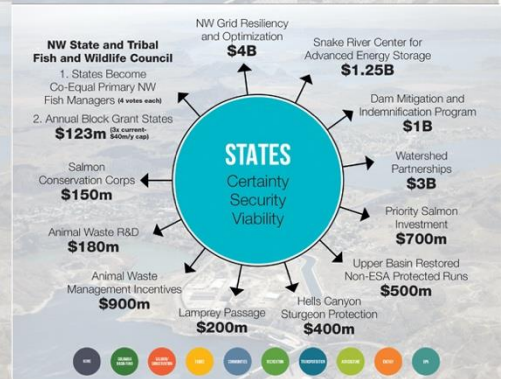
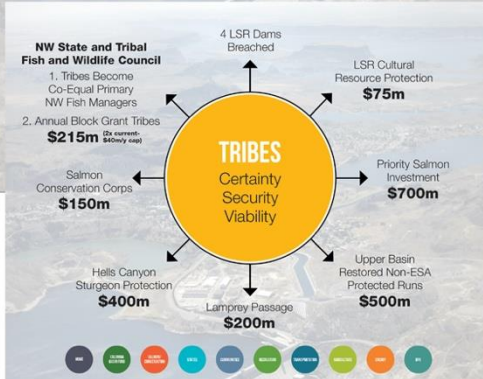
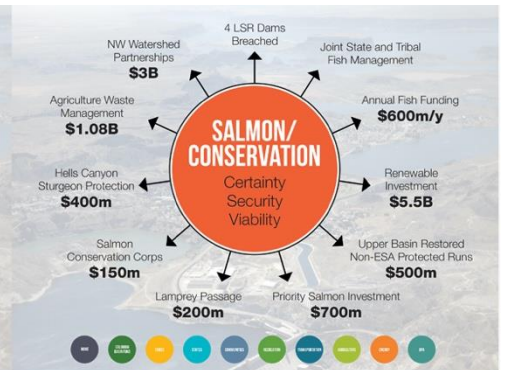
### **BREACHING SCHEDULE**

- 1- **Lower Granite Dam- \$400m**  
Summer/Fall of 2028
- 2- **Little Goose Dam- \$350m**  
Summer/Fall 2029
- 3- **Lower Monumental Dam- \$350m**  
Summer/Fall 2029
- 4- **Ice Harbor Dam- \$300m**  
Summer/Fall 2030



# Simpson InfoGraphs

12/16/2020



### Messages in response to Simpson dam breaching plan

- We are glad that Congressman Simpson has highlighted two issues on which almost everyone in the Pacific Northwest can agree – commitment of real dollars for salmon recovery and increased utilization of carbon-free renewable energy to combat climate change.
  - Real salmon recovery solutions require allocating dollars to the places they can do the most good. We hope Congressman Simpson will work with other leaders to lead the effort to fund fish passage facilities at the many dams in the region which currently block fish from migrating to/from critical productive spawning habitat upriver.
    - Simpson's approach would not restore the one or two listed stocks that would really be benefitted (i.e. Snake River steelhead and Snake spring/summer chinook). Snake River fall chinook are nearly to the point where they could be delisted WITH the dams, and Snake River sockeye are supported by hatchery programs.
  - Hydropower currently provides 90% of the Pacific Northwest's renewable energy and about half its total. We agree that further exploration of and investment in battery and pumped storage technology can allow the region to leverage the benefits of our Columbia Snake hydropower system to an even greater degree, including the very valuable Lower Snake River Dams.
- Funding for salmon recovery and hydropower enhancement shouldn't be tied to an extreme measure like dam breaching.
  - We invite Congressman Simpson to join us in touring one of the lower Snake River dams to learn about their nearly 100% effective fish passage, critical contribution to the region's energy portfolio, and facilitation of fuel efficient, low carbon, safe and reliable barge transportation.
  - We hope that such a tour would convince Congressman Simpson that spending \$32 billion in U.S. taxpayer dollars to remove the Snake River dams and attempt to mitigate at least some of the economic impacts on the many communities and industries that rely upon them fails to provide a solution that works for the entire Pacific Northwest.
- Congressman Simpson's proposal is also likely illegal
  - The Columbia-Snake River Systems is a complex one with many authorized uses and purposes at the federal, state, and local level. Removal of the four lower Snake River dams would require multiple legislative, regulatory, budgetary, and appropriations changes.
  - Congressman Simpson proposes removing the run-of-river Snake River dams with outstanding fish passage, in return for "certainty" for dams in Idaho, which block fish.
- Numerous elements of the Simpson proposal are speculative at best.
  - In proposing to buy out entire communities and industries that rely upon the lower Snake River dams, Congressman Simpson is attempting to place a price tag on an entire region's way of life. While \$32B may address some of the economic impacts of dam breaching, no amount of money can protect the culture, lifestyle, and economies of the communities that depend upon the Columbia-Snake River System.
  - Navigation on the Columbia Snake River System covers 3 states and 7 Congressional districts. Any overhaul of the system requires the participation of leaders from the entire area.
  - Congressman Simpson's proposal fails to take a system-wide approach and relies on investments and technologies that are uncertain at this time. They identify solutions that do not adequately address the adverse impacts on human safety, CO2 emissions, trade, or broader economic and community impacts, among others.
  - Congressman Simpson proposes to replace the renewable, carbon free hydropower of the lower Snake River dams with a menu of alternatives.
    - While we strongly support further exploration of battery and pumped storage, those technologies and many others on Congressman Simpson's "menu" – like hydrogen storage – are in their infancy and/or provide only marginal benefits.



- The only immediately available carbon-neutral replacement for the power from the 4 lower Snake River dams with adequate capacity and response to demand is nuclear power. It would take 3 nuclear, 6 coal-fired, or 14 gas-fired power plants to provide the peak annual power produced by the four Snake River dams.
- The region is already very vulnerable to a power resource inadequacy which will only be exacerbated by tearing out a clean, firm source of energy.
- Congressman Simpson proposes reconfiguring eastern Washington's agricultural transportation system from barging to rail and trucking.
  - The competitiveness of U.S. products overseas is greatly impacted by domestic transportation costs. Recent studies have shown the loss of barging as a transportation alternative will like raise transport costs by 50-100%.
  - The existence of barging as a cargo transport mode helps to discipline rail and trucking rates, ensuring that the price of moving goods in the Pacific Northwest remains competitive.
    - In order to offer competitive rail transport rates, a public entity would need to confiscate the private rail lines from Lewiston to Pasco, and be endowed with funds to run and improve them in perpetuity, providing subsidized rates equal to what private sector competition offers now.
  - Transportation cost increases of this magnitude could potentially bankrupt over 1,000 family farms.
  - But the impacts would go far beyond downriver transportation of wheat and other agricultural products – 40% of lower Snake River cargo is fertilizer, wood chips, wind turbines, and more, heading upriver.
  - Studies have also shown that transitioning barge cargo to less fuel efficient and higher carbon emitting trucks and trains is likely to increase CO2 and other harmful emissions by over 1.25 million tons per year – the equivalent of building a new Boardman coal plant every 5-6 years.
  - One tug with a four-barge tow can ship the equivalent goods of 1.4 100-unit freight trains, or 538 semi- trucks. Much lower carbon footprint.
  - Barging is nearly 40% more fuel-efficient than freight trains, and 270% more fuel-efficient than semi-trucks
  - It is important to note that the Columbia Snake River System shipping corridor has been developed into an integrated system of inland and deep draft navigation. This corridor must be examined as a complete system, and not limited to what some may view as a series of separable parts that are in their view expendable.
  - Already short-handed and over-committed, rail and trucking lines have indicated little ability or willingness to accommodate the increased traffic, even with \$1.5 billion in proposed taxpayer-subsidized infrastructure improvements.
  - Rail capacity is already constrained in the sensitive airshed of the Columbia River Gorge, for example. Further rail congestion in the Columbia River Gorge will impact farmers as far as the upper Midwest, as well as the major cargo ports of Seattle and Tacoma.
  - Breaching would eliminate the ability to transport wheat from 13 elevators on the Snake and Clearwater Rivers to market. These elevators are not set up to load unit trains. Building this infrastructure would be costly and unrealistic.
  - There are serious public safety issues associated with shifting from barging to rail and road. There are 23 rail and 155 truck fatalities to every one for barging. For non-fatal incidents, the numbers are even starker, with every barge related injury corresponding to 125 rail injuries and 2172 trucking related injuries.

- Union jobs would be eliminated on the Snake River, including with the Inland Boatmen's Union and Masters Mates & Pilots
- Congressman Simpson proposes replacing the highly lucrative cruise industry with fishing and other dispersed recreation. The cruise industry delivered over 19,000 passengers and over \$15 million in annual GDP spending to the river system in 2018 alone.