Southern Resident Killer Whales on the brink of extinction. Idaho’s sockeye salmon on life support. The Clearwater River’s once famous wild B-run steelhead population in a state of collapse. After twenty years and the expenditure of $15 Billion taxpayer and ratepayer dollars, no Snake River ESA-listed threatened or endangered salmon or steelhead species is on a path to recovery. Yet the federal agencies that created this tragedy in the making continue to support the status quo, including the continued existence of the lower Snake River dams.

Science and economics are on the salmons’ side. Many politicians are not. Know the facts, find your voice, and take action. We are the people we have been waiting for.

**Freight Transportation on the Lower Snake River**

1. In 1998 LSR freight volume on the reservoirs of the LSR totaled 9.14 million tons. The average annual volume over the past four years is 2.64 million tons, a decline of 70%. LSR Barges no longer transport logs, lumber, paper, pulp, pulse (chick peas, lentils and dry peas) or petroleum. Even grain volume has declined 45%.

2. Container shipping on the LSR, all of which once emanated from the Port of Lewiston, is now zero, a decline of 100%. Beginning in 2000, LSR container volume dropped precipitously for the next 15 years. On a related note, the Port of Portland closed its container operations in 2016 after suffering financial losses from handling containers for 38 out of 40 years.

3. Since 2004 the Corps of Engineers has spent over $30 million taxpayer dollars on sediment management for navigation purposes on the Lower Granite pool. The last dredging project (2014/2015) cost over $10 million, most of which was spent in support of grain shipping by a private corporation from its own property over its own docks.

4. The annual cost of just maintenance and operations of the locks at the 4 LSRDs is approximately $12 million, or a taxpayer subsidy for this cost alone of $15,925 per barge. This figure does not include sediment management costs, multiple millions
of dollars required every few years for major lock rehabilitation projects, or the proportion of Lower Snake River fish mitigation costs attributable to navigation. Combining these costs, a conservative estimate of the taxpayer and ratepayer subsidy for LSR freight transportation is $25,000 per barge. This estimate further does not include a share of lock M & O costs on four dams on the Columbia attributable to LSR freight that passes through those locks, the cost for general dam (as opposed to lock) maintenance, and dredging required to address flow conveyance (flood risk) at Lewiston, Idaho.

5. In the 1950s LSRD supporters assured the public a major benefit of these dams would be economic prosperity for the city of Lewiston Idaho, Nez Perce County, and north-central Idaho. A major indicator of economic prosperity is population growth. From 1980 to 2010, Lewiston grew at a rate of 14% while Idaho’s statewide population growth was 66%. The State of Idaho’s job growth 1996-2016 was 39.7%, compared to north central Idaho’s 6.6%. Growth of Idaho’s labor force 1996-2016 stands at 23.1%, while for north-central Idaho just 3.4%. Private sector employer growth in Idaho during this 20-year period was 49.3% compared to the same measure for north-central Idaho of .1%. Idaho’s only economic region with a port is by far the poorest performing region in the state.

6. In the late 1950s the taxpayers of Nez Perce County, which constitutes the taxing district of the Port of Lewiston, were told they would need to support the port with tax dollars for the first ten or so years of operation until the port became financially self-sufficient. More than 60 years later the Port of Lewiston still requires local and state taxpayer support of over half a million dollars per year.

The Lower Snake River navigation channel is paved with taxpayer subsidies. Costs for maintaining this freight transportation option continue to rise while freight volume continues to decline, leaving taxpayers holding a perpetually empty bag.

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