



Benton PUD
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**No matter what some say,
Snake dams are not easily replaceable**

**Message from
the General Manager**



I was honored to be an invited speaker for part of the Western Caucus Foundation (WCF) energy field tour across Central Washington and am grateful to Representative Dan Newhouse and his staff for extending the invitation.

For those who know me, I love talking about how the western power grid works, the impacts of clean energy policies on the affordability and reliability of electricity, and the importance of hydropower in our region and across the west. So, you can imagine how thrilled I was to get to talk with a very attentive and knowledgeable audience and to be part of a tour that included a boat trip from Columbia Point Marina ending at Ice Harbor dam.

Just days before the WCF event, the Tri-City Herald published an opinion piece I wrote expressing concern over a process being undertaken by Governor Inslee and Senator Murray. In case you missed it, and because the concerns expressed in my Op-Ed were amplified by comments made by Governor Inslee during a visit to the Tri-Cities, we have reprinted the opinion piece along with Governor Inslee's comments for your consideration.

As a consumer-owned and not-for-profit utility, Benton PUD only exists to serve the needs and act in the best interest of our customers. Providing you with affordable, reliable, and environmentally responsible electricity is something we take very seriously. We would love to hear from you to let us know how you think we are doing. We are standing by and happy to provide you with more information and guidance if you would like to engage personally in the ongoing discussions and debates over hydropower.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you, and for putting your trust in us.

Best Regards,
Rick Dunn, General Manager



EmPOWERing Our Community

Kennewick, WA • Prosser, WA • Benton City, WA

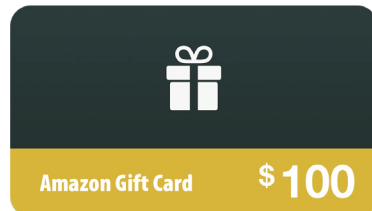
Overwhelmed by what you are hearing in the news? Confused? Can't separate fact from fiction? Join us this September & October for a series of community forums to learn, engage and be empowered to shape your energy future. More details coming soon!

Save Energy This Summer

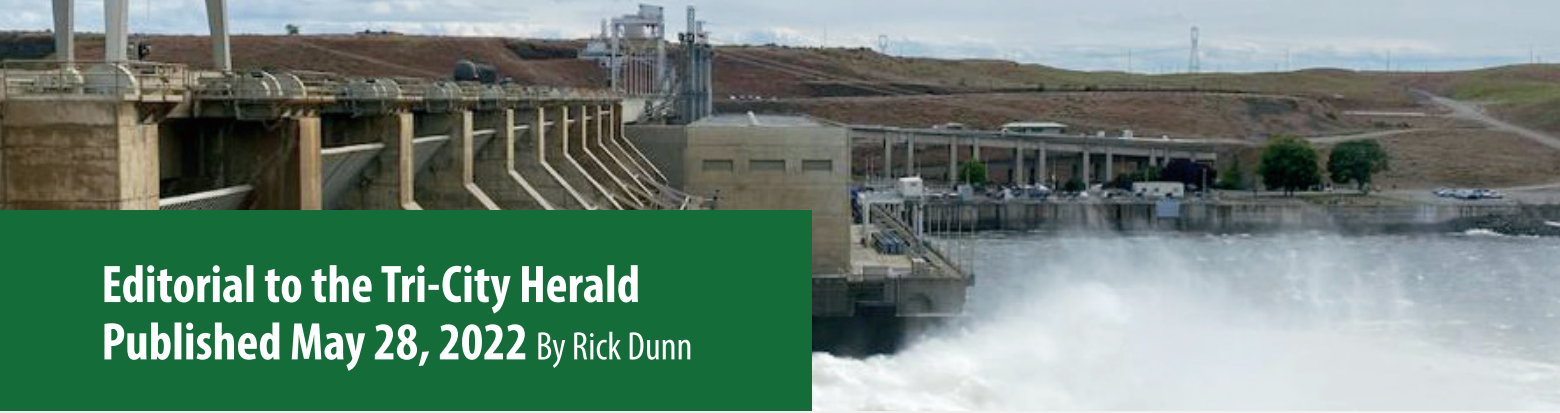
- Keep HVAC filters clean.
- Set thermostat as warm as comfortable and use ceiling fans or portable fans to maintain comfort.
- Use dishwashers and dryers during the coolest part of the morning.
- Set water heater temperature set to 120 degrees or lower.
- Monitor usage in Smart Hub.

Your Opinion Matters!

As a customer and owner of Benton PUD, we want to hear from you. Be on the lookout for a survey coming soon. Complete it, and you could win a **\$100 Amazon gift Card**.



STAY CONNECTED



Editorial to the Tri-City Herald Published May 28, 2022 By Rick Dunn

“Last fall, Sen. Patty Murray and Gov. Jay Inslee announced they would lead a regional process to consider “all options” to restore declining salmon and steelhead runs in the Columbia River Basin, including the potential breaching of the lower Snake River dams (LSRD). After declaring they would approach the breaching question with open minds and without a predetermined decision, the process they have used has led many electric utility representatives and trade organizations to believe otherwise.

This coming month a draft “report” from the Murray-Inslee process will be released and it will not surprise me in the least if dam breaching advocacy is front and center. And while I appreciated being selected to provide input to the process, I continue to be frustrated and deeply concerned by the politicization of energy and environmental issues.

What else can you call it when Sen. Murray and Gov. Inslee choose to undermine and even ignore the recommendations derived from a multi-year, multi-million-dollar comprehensive study and 2020 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS); an EIS developed by scientists, engineers, and other professionals who have worked for decades on balancing hydropower operations and fish recovery. It is irresponsible and clearly political to suggest the EIS cannot be trusted simply because it was completed during the previous presidential administration.

It is important for the public to understand, those who are responsible for planning and operating the power grid comprehensively and meticulously studied LSRD breaching as an EIS option, concluding it would more than double our region’s risk of power shortages and could result in as much as a 50% increase in wholesale electricity rates under a carbon free replacement scenario.

Providing affordable, environmentally responsible, and reliable electricity is a full-time job. And I am honored and proud to have made it my career. I don’t have all the answers but want the public to know, **any claims coming out of the Murray-Inslee process suggesting part-time wind and solar power can easily replace LSRD hydropower are not supported by most of us in the business of helping ensure the health, safety, and wellbeing of our customers.** There are sound scientific reasons for our position, but it’s also just common sense.

Aggressive clean energy policies which are rapidly removing reliable generation from the grid are creating a deepening dependence on hydropower to provide the moment-by-moment balancing of electricity supply and demand. **No matter what dam breaching advocates proclaim, the Snake River dams are not surplus and easily replaceable.** In addition to being significant contributors to the blackout insurance needed during extreme weather conditions, the generation from the LSRD is foundational to the power supply portfolios of 142 Bonneville Power Administration customers, including 127 consumer-owned, not-for-profit utilities located in five northwest states.

Like countless others who rely on the federal hydropower system, I have worked hard to understand salmon science. I have also learned when trying to separate politics from science, be wary of those who say, “the science is settled” and proclaim the opinions of certain scientists as scientific facts. I have lived in the northwest almost my entire life and love all that our rivers provide. Salmon and steelhead recovery is an unbelievably complex issue, but from my chair the science is far from settled. There is still plenty we don’t know and need to understand before considering radical action like dam breaching; especially now. **We need to keep the lower Snake River dams.”**

Governor Inslee Comments on Snake River Dams

During a visit to the Tri-Cities, when questioned by the Tri-City Herald on the replacement of Snake River dams, Governor Inslee told the Tri-City Herald that he and Senator Murray “share a view that we ought to be willing to look at what would be required to replace the services of these dams. I’m glad we are doing it and have an administration willing to look at the science.”

Inslee also stated to the Tri-City Herald that “the overriding failure of the Trump administration, under which the environmental study (EIS) was completed, was a refusal to follow science and that **“anyone who trusted Donald Trump’s administration to make a decision on science would be buying the Brooklyn Bridge.”**

For more go to our website at BentonPUD.org/SnakeRiverDams

Recognizing the LSRD are a critical component of Benton PUD’s long-term power supply portfolio, representing on average about 10% of annual energy supplies provided to our customers, failure to act could have significant consequences for District ratepayers in the future.

To mitigate the risk of breaching the LSRD, Benton PUD, along with several other Pacific Northwest utilities, has committed to an aggressive pro-LSRD education campaign in support of the LSRD led by the Northwest River Partners. Go to nriverpartners.org to learn more about the campaign and to join our fight for preserving hydroelectricity.

Low Income Conservation Rebates

Benton PUD offers up to \$6,200 in rebates for qualified low-income customers to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Rebates are available for weatherization projects such as insulation and windows, door replacements, heat pumps and ductless heat pumps for single-family and manufactured homes that are electrically heated. All work must be performed by an approved contractor. For more information or to set up a home audit with one of our Energy Efficiency Advisors, call (509) 582-1234.

Science is Unsettled – Delayed Mortality

As we consider something as impactful as dam breaching in the context of salmon ecology and the extraordinarily complex number of associated variables and influences, it is important to be open to the possibility that objective science may reveal something that is not intuitive.

Along these lines, **it is important to know Chinook salmon returns in the Snake River are not a whole lot different than returns in the Puget Sound and even pristine, free-flowing Alaskan rivers.** This finding was confirmed by the Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB), which is the region’s salmon science equivalent to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. Additionally, there is **scientific evidence of a coast-wide decline in survival of West Coast Chinook Salmon regardless of whether a river is dammed or not.**

Now **consider the theory of dam caused delayed mortality.** This theory hypothesizes that young salmon encounters with dams causes cumulative trauma on their migration to the ocean. And that this trauma results in death after the salmon has migrated passed the last dam and has made it into the estuary or ocean. And while the ISAB agrees the hydro system causes some fish to experience delayed mortality, they have also concluded the **magnitude of the impact of delayed mortality on salmon survival is highly uncertain and cannot be scientifically proven** because there are too many dynamic variables in the ocean environment.

Despite the fact dam caused delayed mortality clearly represents unsettled science, many dam breaching advocates are promoting salmon survival computer modelling which attributes the majority of recent declines in returning adults to decreased ocean survival directly associated with passage past the dams. In other words, **despite serious scientific uncertainty surrounding delayed mortality, this questionable theory is being used as scientific evidence adequate for justifying removal of the Lower Snake River dams.**

We all want healthy and sustainable salmon runs. While it is understandable emotions can run high in the debate over what our next steps should be, **all interested parties should be open and honest about what we know and don’t know.** The stakes are too high for settling on anything less than the best science available to guide our path forward.

For more information go to our website at BentonPUD.org/SnakeRiverDams