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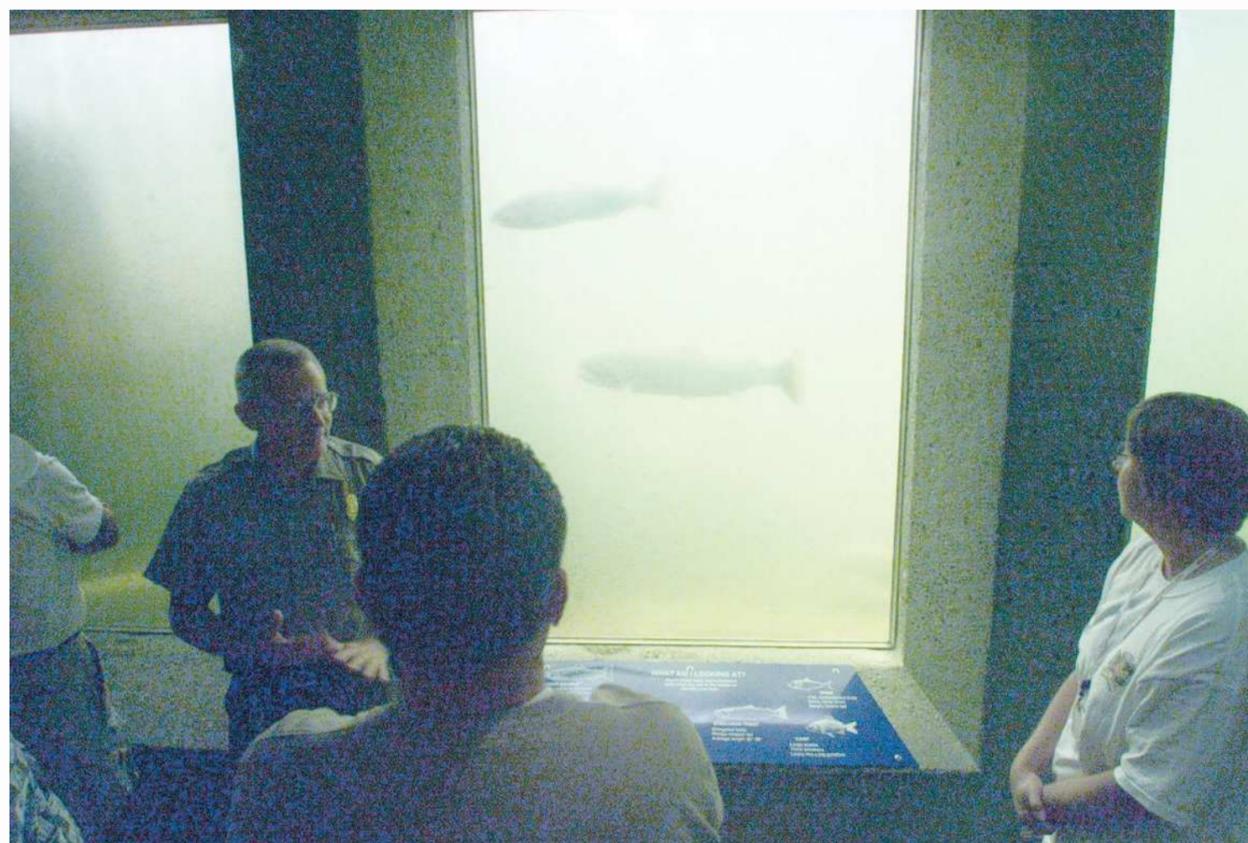
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# Tri-City Herald



Tri-City Herald file

Seen here is the fish-viewing area at Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River facility near Burbank.

## Most virus vaccine has gone to white residents, state says

BY MELISSA HELLMANN  
*Seattle Times*

Scarce doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have so far gone disproportionately to white Washington residents, new data from the state Department of Health (DOH) shows.

As in other states, Black and Hispanic residents have tested positive for the coronavirus at a higher rate compared to white residents, but vaccination numbers haven't matched each group's vulnerability.

The Seattle Times obtained data on the race and ethnicity of vaccine recipients from the state through Jan. 30, and compared it to the case counts, deaths and population demographics. The Times analysis shows Washington has some clear gaps.

While 67% of people who received their initial doses were white, 48% of the state's cases of COVID-19, the illness caused by the coronavirus, have been in white patients.

On the other hand, Black and Hispanic residents have been comparatively under-vaccinated. Just 5% of people receiving an initial dose were Hispanic, while 32% of people who have tested positive for coronavirus have been Hispanic. Black residents have received 2% of the initial doses, but they account for 6% of cases.

The picture changes slightly when you look at COVID-19 deaths. White residents, who make up 71% of the state's deaths, are relatively under-vaccinated. But Hispanic residents, with 12% of the total deaths, still face a larger gap.

A DOH spokesperson said officials are still analyzing the race data, and haven't come to any conclusions about inequities.

"That being said, we do want to address any gaps in vaccination and get the vaccine to those who are at highest risk," DOH spokesperson Danielle Koenig said in an email. "We are always assessing our activities for equity and social justice, supplying vaccine information in up to 37 languages, and working to identify and overcome barriers as they come up."

The department is "meeting regularly with many different communities to get direct feedback on what they need to support getting vaccinated," Koenig added.

One obstacle for addressing inequities is that the state's data is incomplete. About 1 in 10 patients receiving an initial vaccine are listed as "unknown," and an unusually large share reported "other" as their race. Vaccine providers are required to enter race and ethnicity into the state's immunization registry, but not all do. At least two providers told The Seattle Times they don't ask for race. Also, Koenig said "unknown" is an acceptable re-

SEE VACCINE, 4A

## Tri-City groups leery of \$33B proposal to remove dams

BY ANNETTE CARY  
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A new proposal to tear down the four Lower Snake River dams has people agreeing on one thing — the dams' value to the Northwest region.

But many of those who rely on the dams now — to produce low-cost and reliable electricity, to barge farm products for export, to provide irrigation water and for recreation — are dubious despite the plan's attempts to make them economically whole.

U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson of Idaho has proposed breaching the dams and spending \$33 billion to dismantle them, build new energy and transportation systems and address the economic impacts of their loss.

It's the only way the conservative Republican sees to boost the declining population of certain species of salmon in Idaho that must make a 900-mile journey to and from the Pacific Ocean, navigating at least eight hydroelectric dams on the Snake and Columbia rivers.

The Tri-Cities along with the Lewiston-Clarkston area are the two metro areas with the most to lose if the dams are breached.

"We appreciate that Rep. Simpson's concept attempts to address the wide array of negative impacts that would come from removing the dams, but at the end of the day dam removal is simply not good public policy," said David Reeploeg, vice president for federal programs for the Tri-City Development Council.

That is even though TRIDEC would receive \$75 million to be spent on local economic development.

"There is no certainty that removing the dams would result in significantly better fish numbers, but we do know for certain that it would hurt communities and industries throughout the Pacific Northwest," Reeploeg said.

### NEW CONSIDERATION

Groups and business interests that have fought for more than two decades to keep the Lower Snake River dams aren't willing to let them go now, particularly when the Northwest may be facing power generation and reliability issues even without the loss of the dams.

But some long-time supporters of keep-



Tri-City Herald file

Power Plant Operator Don Plucker of Kennewick checks the exciter brushes on the top of a hydraulic turbine generator inside the powerhouse at the Ice Harbor Dam.

ing the lower Snake River dams are open to at least listening to what Simpson has to say and see if he wins the backing of the rest of the Northwest Congressional delegation to move forward.

Congressional support was not off to a strong start.

"I have said it time and time again — as long as I am in Congress, nobody is tearing down our dams," said Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash.

"I have great respect for Rep. Simpson, and we will continue to work together on many different policy issues that impact the Pacific Northwest. But removing or breaching the Lower Snake River Dams is one that we fundamentally disagree on."

Newhouse also joined Republican Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Jaime Herrera Beutler in Washington state and Russ Fulcher in Idaho on Friday in a resolution in support of existing and new Northwest hydropower.

"(Hydropower) benefits every resident, family, and business in our region, and it's an important component of the all-of-the-above energy strategy that will ensure the United States maintains energy independ-

ence and leadership on the global stage," the resolution said.

### WILLING TO DISCUSS

After years of study, the latest environmental report looking at breaching the four dams along the Snake River from Ice Harbor near the Tri-Cities concluded that the best option was for the dams to remain.

But there is no certainty that the decision made to maintain the dams based on the study will stand. A coalition of environmental and fishing groups have petitioned the federal court to intervene for a sixth time.

"We believe Rep. Simpson's plan has the best of intentions, and it deserves to be vetted among Northwest stakeholder groups," said Kurt Miller, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, a nonprofit representing utilities, farmers, businesses, and ports that rely on the Northwest's hydropower system.

But there are significant concerns, he said, including for the many families in the Northwest that rely on jobs that are de-

SEE DAMS, 4A

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FROM PAGE 1A

## DAMS

pendent on the dams. They range from seasonal farm workers to riverboat operators.

"Any plan around dam removal must consider how we specifically support these families," Miller said. "As we've learned throughout the pandemic, a check from the government cannot make up for the loss of one's career."

Any decision to take out the dams would affect nearly every person in the Tri-Cities area, which relies on the low-cost and the reliable electricity delivery that the dams have made possible.

"The clean, renewable power generated by the dams along the Columbia and Snake rivers supplies half of the Pacific Northwest's energy and is critical for a reliable power grid," said the Congressional resolution. "Without it, life as we know it in our region would cease to exist."

### ELECTRICITY PRODUCTION

Simpson's proposal would provide \$10 billion for new power generation facilities to replace the production of the four dams from Ice Harbor near the Tri-Cities upriver to near Lewiston, Idaho. It would also provide \$2 billion for changes and improvements to the grid that delivers electricity, including to the Tri-Cities.

But Northwest RiverPartners said it appears to make a risky bet that new technologies will be ready to replace the proven technology of hydropower.

Under a suggested timeline, new generation would need to be ready to start replacing hydropower within a decade.

With a move toward clean energy in the Northwest, the replacement generation could include new small modular nuclear reactors, which could be based in the Tri-Cities.

It also would likely in-

clude wind and solar production paired with battery storage to make sure electricity is available when the wind is not blowing or the sun is not shining.

But neither small modular reactors nor the type of batteries needed for long-term to store wind and solar energy in the Northwest remain under development.

Currently, battery storage is available but is generally used for storing electricity for a few hours. The Northwest likely would need new kinds of battery storage to provide constant power for much longer periods, such as winter cold snaps when the wind may not blow for days.

"We welcome the advancement of these technologies, but the region's electric customers should not be made reliant on technological breakthroughs to keep the lights on," Miller said.

Planning and building just a single power plant now can take a decade to build, said Rick Dunn, Benton PUD general manager.

The Northwest already is facing potential electric reliability issues as coal plants are being taken out of service, he said.

### ELECTRICITY RELIABILITY

"We know that our region will need gigawatts of additional power to avoid brownouts and blackouts," said Reeploeg, with TRI-DEC. "We should be investing in new energy generation regardless, not just as part of a package that includes breaching the dams. In fact, removing the dams would only create bigger energy challenges."

The Northwest will need to replace 3,000 megawatts of electricity production from coal generation in 10 years.

Also replacing the



Tri-City Herald file

In this 2013 file photo, the Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River is seen from the air near Pasco.

3,000-megawatt capacity of the Snake River dams in a decade is "unbelievably aggressive," Dunn said. "It is a risky proposition."

The dams not only provide 10% of the baseload generating ability for the 135 customer electric utilities of the Bonneville Power Administration, but also provides 25% of BPA's operating reserves, he said.

Operating reserves allow quick action when power lines or generators go offline to prevent a cascading series of events that could end in blackouts.

Simpson's proposal is worth discussion, but removing the dams would provide a huge challenge even if the grid was on a stable trajectory, Dunn said.

### TRANSPORTATION

While the plan calls for replacing hydropower production with clean energy sources, replacing the system of barging wheat and other products up and down the Snake River would increase carbon emissions.

The system of locks and dams makes it possible for barges to navigate the Snake River from the Tri-Cities to the Lewiston-Clarkston area.

Shipments now sent by barge would likely be transported by truck and rail, not only significantly increasing carbon emissions but increasing injuries and fatalities, said Kristin Meira, executive director of Pacific Northwest Waterways Association.

believes that inequity will become worse. "Once essential workers are part of the mix to be eligible to be vaccinated, it will be an even bigger problem," she said.

Compared to other states with similar racial demographics, Washington's vaccine disparities appear to be comparable. Oregon, for instance, has the same share of Hispanic residents as Washington, and they make up 35% of cases there, according to an analysis by the Kaiser Family Foundation. But just 6% of Oregon's vaccinations have gone to Hispanic people.

As with other aspects of COVID-19 data, Washington's effort to collect and publicly share racial data around vaccinations has been slow and prone to problems. The state has planned to post race and other demographic data on its online vaccine data "dashboard," but as of Friday it had not done so.

"Unfortunately, we have had to work through a lot of technical difficulties, along with some data collection, analysis, and capacity hurdles that have delayed getting it to the dashboard," Koenig said.

Racial disparities in vaccination rates have been found throughout the country, said Eric Schneider, a senior vice president at the New York-based Commonwealth Fund, a private foundation that supports research on health care practice and policy.

However, it's difficult to know the accurate rate of disparity since about 50% of the vaccine recipients' races are listed as "unknown" in the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.

"We need to have better data to really understand the inequity," Schneider said.

expect they are going to be able to run their plants."

### IRRIGATION

About 91,000 acres is irrigated with pump stations designed to work with the Lower Snake River dams, and Simpson proposes \$750 million for those irrigators.

The amount matches, and even provides some cushion, to what the Columbia-Snake River Irrigators Association previously said would be needed to address the economic impacts of removing the dams.

The association told Simpson it is "not going to throw rocks" at his proposal or get in the way of anything the Northwest Congressional delegation can reach agreement on, said Darryll Olsen, association board representative.

That's despite the association's stand in support of retaining the dams.

Olsen fears that U.S. Judge Michael Simon, who ordered the recently completed environmental study on dam removal, is preparing to eviscerate the findings of the study, which did not call for breaching the dams.

The judge's next step may be to order a plan and schedule to demolish the dams, although he lacks the authority to order them torn down, Olsen said.

And irrigators no longer have the power of the presidency on their side. They believe former President Donald Trump would not have allowed the dams to be removed.

### FISH SURVIVAL

Simpson's goal is rebuilding declining populations of Idaho fish.

But even he admits that breaching the dams is not a sure solution.

Endangered fish face challenges that include ocean conditions and global climate change that has contributed to river and reservoir temperatures warming to temperatures unsuitable for salmon.

"Only four of the 13 ESA (Endangered Species Act)

listed salmon runs even swim past the lower Snake River dams and they do so with over 95% transit survival," said Mike Carstensen, chairman of the Washington Grain Commission.

It's a percentage that other supporters of keeping the dams have agreed is correct, at least for each dam.

"Given the Pacific Coast-wide declines in salmon survival in both dammed and undammed rivers, it is hard to make the case that breaching dams with advanced fish passage technology will reverse this disturbing trend," said Miller with Northwest RiverPartners.

"If sustainable salmon populations don't return to the Snake River, U.S. taxpayers will have footed the bill to the tune of tens of billions of dollars to end up with a larger carbon footprint than we have today," he said.

However the Yakama Nation, which has treaty rights to salmon in the Columbia River Basin, applauded Simpson for his proposal.

It said that federal dams have devastated its ability to take full benefit of its fishing rights.

"We have reached a tipping point where we must choose between our treaty-protected salmon and the federal dams, and we choose salmon," said Delano Saluskin, chairman of the Yakama Nation Tribal Council.

Dams and salmon can, and do, coexist in the Northwest, Newhouse said.

"The extensive, world-class research and technological advances occurring at the Lower Snake River dams is already leading the way for significantly improved fish passage rates," he argued. "We have seen tremendous progress, and I will continue to support efforts to improve salmon survivability."

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FROM PAGE 1A

## VACCINE

sponse.

It is important for the state to track race to understand who is receiving the vaccine, said Estela Ortega, executive director of Seattle-based nonprofit El Centro de la Raza. El Centro de la Raza primarily serves the local Latino population, and is working to add a vaccination site at its Plaza Roberto Maestas & Centilia Cultural Center in Beacon Hill, although an opening date has not been established.

The state's vaccine priority scheme and disjointed registration systems could explain some of the disparities, Ortega said.

The current DOH guidelines prioritize people 65 and older as well as people 50 and over in multigenerational households who live with and care for grandchildren or can't live independently. But Ortega believes that the younger Latino population has higher incident rates of COVID-19 because they're essential workers, in sectors like food service and construction. "Although we know that the Latino population is working and they're in another age group, the vaccine can't be given to them right now," she said.

Additionally, people eligible to receive the vaccine have faced difficulty scheduling appointments and navigating Phase Finder, the state's online questionnaire for vaccine eligibility. "The system appears to be broken, because people can't get in," Ortega added. An elder in her community woke up at 4 a.m. to schedule an appointment, and she said within 30 minutes of securing his

spot, he looked again and found that all appointments were booked.

Another barrier to vaccine access is that DOH prioritized high-volume vaccination sites over community health centers, said Teresita Batayola, president and CEO of International Community Health Services. Now the state is ramping up vaccines for community health clinics.

ICHS places its vaccination orders with DOH, and since Jan. 18, ICHS has not received any vaccines from the state, Batayola said. Last week, Public Health — Seattle & King County gave ICHS 500 doses. Then this week, the department convinced Swedish Health Services to give ICHS 800 of their doses.

"Community health centers serving the disproportionately impacted should be assured supplies," Batayola said. "In the formal allocation process, we would have been standing to the side," Batayola said. The vaccine shortage became even greater when Gov. Jay Inslee expanded the eligible population in phase 1B last month from 70 years to those 65 years and older.

ICHS says it serves close to 33,000 patients, and most are low income, people of color and 1 in 5 are 65 and older. The clinic's patients speak over 50 languages.

About 7,000 of the agency's patients are eligible to receive the vaccine, and the flagship clinic in the Chinatown International District expanded its vaccination distribution to nonpatients living in the largely low-income area.

If the vaccine shortage continues, Batayola be-

Vaccine hesitancy contributes to some of the disparity because it is higher among people of color, Schneider said, referring to recent surveys. Additionally, Schneider

said vaccination sites appear to open more often in areas with a higher white population.

"We're still in a scarcity period of the vaccine being in short supply," Schneider

said. "I think that this problem will get worse as the vaccine becomes more available and if people let their guard down about ensuring that it's equitably distributed."

## Obituaries

### OBITUARY INDEX

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NAME, AGE	CITY	DEATH	ARRANGEMENTS
<b>Peterson, Robert, 86</b>	<b>Boise</b>	<b>Jan 25</b>	<b>Cloverdale Funeral Home</b>

**Bold listings indicate expanded obituaries**

### Robert Peterson October 23, 1934 - January 25, 2021



**Boise, Idaho** - In remembrance of a loving, wonderful man, Robert A. Peterson, 86, who went to be with his heavenly Father on Monday, January 25th. Also known to family and friends as Bob or Pete.

He was the son of the late Lucille and Everett Peterson, born in Tomahawk Wisconsin. Lived in Duluth, MN until he was 13, then moved to Pasco, WA where he met the love of his life, Shirley Hagan.

Robert attended Pasco High school, graduated in 1951, where he was the last student/athlete to letter in 4 varsity sports in one year and still holds that honor to this day.

His excellent athleticism gained him a full ride basketball college scholarship to Eastern Washington University. Unfortunately, his college days were cut short because his family needed help and being the giving, loving man that he was, he



went home to work and support his family.

Shortly after that, he was drafted to serve his country in the Army for two years, based in Hawaii.

Upon his return from the service, Robert married the love of his life and best friend, Shirley, for 63 years. They had two daughters, Denise (deceased) and Kara, who is married to Erv Hoge.

He was a loving, supporting father who sang to Kara each morning to get her up for school, putting a smile on her face to start her day.

One of his greatest achievements and joys was completing his 4 years of Sheet Metal Union apprenticeship school to become one of the best sheet metal journeymen in the union for 60 years. While working in his trade, he made many wonderful lifelong friends and was known for his skilled excellence combined with his hard work for the many successful projects he managed and completed

with perfection for his customers.

Robert was always willing to help family and friends with projects big or small. With his kind, giving and generous heart, he enjoyed helping and was happy to pitch in whenever anyone needed his help.

He was a proud and loving Papa to Natalie Peterson, Cody Hoge and Desiree' Hoge. He played endless games with them, joking, laughing and loving them.

Cody, married to Stacia, blessed him with two beautiful great grandsons, Linkin and Halen. His face would light up with the biggest smile when he would see them or viewed pictures of them.

Robert will be missed by many nieces, nephews and many good friends. He will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him.

His family thanks God for blessing us with his kindness, devotion, faithfulness and love.

Robert will be forever remembered for his wonderful sense of humor, his wonderful laugh, caring heart, and unconditional love. Although our hearts are heavy, we will celebrate his life and find comfort that he is in heaven watching over us.

His final resting place will be at Desert Memorial Park, Vets Urn Garden, Kennewick, Washington.