

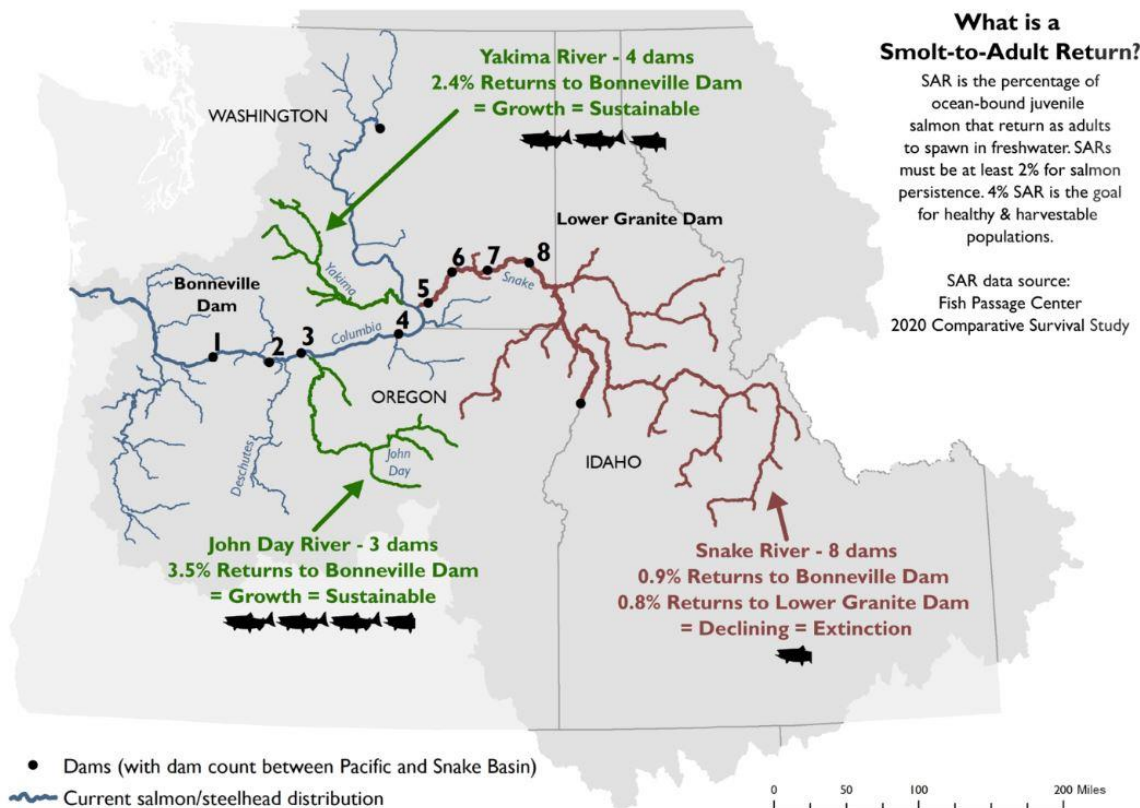


AMERICAN FALLS FFA CHAPTER PORTFOLIO  
 Idaho FFA Association  
 Agricultural Issues Forum



# Have We Dammed A Legacy and Our Future?

## Wild Chinook Salmon Smolt-to-Adult Returns in the Columbia River Basin



**Team Members:**

Aunnika Allen, Hannely Cardona, Jessica Hernandez, Alexia Medel,  
 Damaris Ortiz, Wrendon Osborne and Macy Winder

Idaho FFA Career Development  
 Agricultural Issues Event  
 June 10, 2022  
 University of Idaho  
 Moscow, Idaho

American Falls FFA Chapter  
 American Falls High School  
 2966 South Frontage Road  
 American Falls, Idaho, 83211  
 208-226-2531

## THE ISSUE – HAVE WE DAMMED A LEGACY AND OUR FUTURE?

**List sample courses in which instruction occurred** (196 students engaged):

- *Intro to Leadership and Communication*: critical thinking, problem solving and written communications.
- *Honors Ag Biology*: in-depth exploration and research of prominent biological and ecological concepts.
- *Personal Skill Development*: critical thinking, research, analytical writing and leadership strategies are used.
- *Dual Enrollment Communication and Leadership*: prepares students for leadership and communication roles.
- *Small Stream Ecology*: examines small stream ecology and the importance these waters have in Idaho's culture.

**How can this issue be defined?** Congressman Mike Simpson proposed the removal of the four lower Snake River dams which include: Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose and Lower Granite; resulting in controversy on a local, state, regional and national level since 1999. This issue tackles the potential extinction of spring Chinook salmon. Additionally, it increases the likelihood of higher Bonneville Power Administration ratepayer expenses, the loss of jobs and the loss of economically affordable ways of transporting goods. For many, it remains unclear whether removing the four dams is the correct choice in restoring spring Chinook salmon.

**Why is this issue important now?** Since the completion of the four dams in 1975, spring Chinook salmon runs have been negatively impacted prompting their listing under the Endangered Species Act (U.S. Congressman Mike Simpson, n.d.). Before the dams were built, over 1.5 million spring Chinook salmon returned each year to their spawning grounds in central Idaho. In 2019, only 3,763 of these adult fish returned (United States Congressman Mike Simpson, 2021). The dams ensure a continuous supply of energy for 800,000 ratepayers in the Northwest region and neighboring states (BPA.gov - Bonneville Power Administration, 2016). Failing to breach the dams could result in the extinction of spring Chinook salmon. However, these dams provide a reliable source of power to households and businesses in the Pacific Northwest along with irrigation and barge transportation of goods.

**What is the nature of this issue?** By 1975, eight major dams were built by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers; four on the Columbia River and four on the lower Snake River. These dams have hindered salmon migration and immigration. Thus, causing the salmon population to decrease to the verge of extinction (U.S. Congressman Mike Simpson, n.d.). At each dam, around 10% of the salmon populations are lost as they migrate and immigrate (U.S. Congressman Mike Simpson, n.d.). The lower four dams make it difficult for numerous anadromous species to migrate down to the Pacific Ocean and immigrate upstream to their home waters and spawning areas. According to the BPA, as juvenile and adult salmon travel through the lower four dams, there is a predicted 90-95% survival rate. Regardless of this prediction, salmon numbers are still diminishing.

**Who is involved in this case?** In this complex case, Representative Mike Simpson proposed the idea of breaching the lower four dams owned by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The removal of the dams is opposed by farmers across Idaho, Oregon and Washington, the Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, Bonneville Power Administration and the 800,000 ratepayers who rely on BPA for affordable energy (BPA.gov - Bonneville Power Administration, 2016). These organizations and businesses struggle to find a middle ground with numerous conservation groups including Earth Justice and The Idaho Conservation League, sportsmen/fishermen and all of the tribes of the Northwest who advocate and litigate for the breaching of the lower four Snake River dams as salmon and steelhead numbers decrease yearly.

**What is the historical background of this issue?** For thousands of years, both salmon and humans coexisted with each other. The Native communities would eat what they needed, while large portions of the salmon population would be left to complete their life cycle of spawning in the streams of central Idaho. For millennia, salmon migrate down to the ocean to grow and mature, then travel upstream to their birthplace to spawn and die. The construction of the four lower Snake River dams was approved by Congress in 1945. The dams were designed to provide hydropower and barge traffic, which is necessary for the Northwest's economy (DamSense, n.d.). By 1975, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed construction of a series of four dams across 137 miles of the lower Snake River between Oregon and Washington. Ice Harbor was the first dam in the lower Snake River to be built and put into service in the Washington counties of Franklin and Walla Walla in 1962. The construction of Lower Monumental Dam followed Ice Harbor in 1969. The third dam, Little Goose, was completed and inaugurated in 1970. That same year, researchers began to discover a decline in Idaho's salmon population (DamSense, n.d.). The Lower Granite Dam, the last and final dam built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, was finished in 1975.

Soon after dam construction was completed, salmon run populations decreased dramatically. Wild salmon returns fell by more than 90% (Lower Snake River Dams Stakeholder Engagement Report, 2019, p. 28). The Idaho

## THE ISSUE – HAVE WE DAMMED A LEGACY AND OUR FUTURE?

Conservation League reported that before the dams, over 1.5 million Chinook salmon returned to their spawning grounds each year. By 2019, only about 3,763 wild Chinook had completed that journey (United States Congressman Mike Simpson, 2021). In 1991, Chinook salmon were listed under the Endangered Species Act. In February of 2021, Idaho Representative Mike Simpson announced a proposal of compromise for the removal of the four dams (U.S. Congressman Mike Simpson, n.d.). Fishing and conservation groups along with the Pacific Northwest tribes are suing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service to remove the dams. Judge Michael Simon of the United States District Court of Oregon has granted a stay in the lawsuit. The current stay will expire on July 31, 2022, at which point litigation will be continued (Geranios, 2021).

**What caused this issue?** For more than 50 years, these dams have blocked salmon migration and immigration and have led to water quality and environmental issues in certain parts of the river. The building of these four major dams on the Snake River are the foundation for the declining salmon runs in the Columbia and Snake River basins (U.S. Congressman Mike Simpson, n.d.). Fifty years of litigation and lawsuits has brought us to where we are today.

**What are the risks of keeping the dams?** The risks of keeping the four lower Snake River dams operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and BPA could result in the extinction of spring Chinook salmon. Salmon runs that immigrate through the four dams decrease in number by 10% at each dam (Save our Wild Salmon, n.d.). Commercial fishermen capture roughly 10% of the salmon population in the ocean. In total, salmon runs will decline by half before reaching their spawning grounds. The declining salmon population has continued to negatively affect tribal fishing communities and the ecosystem. Moreover, multiple organizations and businesses have expended \$17 billion dollars on fish recovery projects that have been proven not to work (U.S. Congressman Mike Simpson, n.d.).

Keeping the dams promotes wasteful spending practices. These four dams break the Nez Perce Treaty of 1855 which states on page 2 article 3, “The exclusive right of taking fish in all the streams where running through or bordering said reservation is further secured to said Indians.” Rep. Simpson states, “One of the treaty obligations we have with the tribes is to maintain the fishing rights that they have, and you can't do that with no fish” (U.S. Forest Service, n.d.). Impounding a free-flowing river will increase the negative impacts of global warming and worsen the chances for a healthy, sustainable future for Pacific salmon ecosystems. The dams generate 1.07 gigatons of carbon dioxide and methane annually (ScienceDaily, 2021). The dams will cause the extinction of spring Chinook salmon, promote wasteful spending in organizations and businesses, break native treaty rights and destroy ecosystems.

**What are the benefits of keeping the dams?** The four lower Snake River dams provide benefits for barging, workers, carbon emission reduction, farmers and ratepayers. The dams have created thousands of jobs in tourism, paper manufacturing, munition manufacturing, water transportation, lumber mill and wholesale trade. Eliminating these jobs displaces thousands of people. The removal of the dams makes it nearly impossible for goods like wheat, barley and other crops to be transported economically, efficiently and effectively. Barging is an eco-friendly way to transport crops because of the low amount of carbon emissions (Idaho State Department of Agriculture, n.d.). Ten million tons of wheat are transported down the river to Portland annually, half of which is transported by barge (Keeping the Columbia/Snake, 2005). Removing the dams will increase carbon emissions by 2 to 2.6 million metric tons annually, which is equivalent to adding 421,000 passenger cars to the region's roads each year in crop transportation alone (BPA.gov - Bonneville Power Administration, 2016).

Thirteen farms utilize the irrigation system provided by the Ice Harbor Dam to water 35,000 acres of land. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimates that an investment of \$291,481,000 will be needed for infrastructure improvements to continue irrigation solely with the removal of the Ice Harbor Dam (UW Faculty Web Server, n.d.). Finally, BPA ratepayers will pay an additional \$274 to \$372 million more per year if the dams were breached (BPA.gov - Bonneville Power Administration, 2016).

**Is there a strong disagreement on this issue?** The proposed removal of the dams highlights a clear disagreement between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, farmers of the Northwest and the National Marine Fisheries Service who are currently being sued by fishing and conservation groups along with the indigenous peoples of the Northwest. Our research has revealed no willingness by the opposing sides to compromise. In 2021, U.S. District Judge Michael Simon in Portland, Oregon, granted a request by both sides in the lawsuit seeking the stay until July 31, 2022, so they can try to negotiate a settlement in the lawsuit. As of today, no agreement has been made.

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**Additional Communication**

Johnson, Don. PhD. Ichthyology (2022, March 9). Personal Interview

Simpson, Mike. U.S Idaho District 2 Representative (2022, February 23). Personal Interview.

## American Falls FFA Ag Issues Forum Summary

Forum #	Forum Audience	Forum Date	Time	Attendance	High or Low Quality
1	Mike Simpson, Idaho District 2 Representative	February 23, 2022	11:00AM	8	High Quality
2	American Falls Lions Club	March 8, 2022	7:30PM	13	High Quality
3	Power County Board of Commissioners	March 14, 2022	12:00PM	4	High Quality

# THE ISSUE – HAVE WE DAMMED A LEGACY AND OUR FUTURE?

Forum #	Forum Audience	Forum Date	Time	Attendance	High or Low Quality
4	American Falls Rotary Club	March 16, 2022	12:00PM	8	High Quality
5	Power County Farm Bureau	March 16, 2022	6:30PM	56	High Quality
6	Pocatello Rotary Club	March 17, 2022	12:00PM	72	High Quality
7	Idaho Governor Brad Little	May 19, 2022	10:00AM	6	High Quality
8	Director Celia Gould, Idaho Department of Agriculture	May 19, 2022	11:30AM	11	High Quality
9	Eastern Idaho Fish and Game	May 20, 2020	12:00PM	4	High Quality
10	Idaho State Ag Issues LDE (not included)	June 8, 2022	5:00PM	33	High Quality

## Mike Simpson, Idaho District 2 Representative      Forum 1 – 8 attendees      February 23, 2022



### Breaching dams to save salmon

U.S. Representative Mike Simpson talks to FFA students in the American Falls High School media center on Wednesday, Feb. 23, about breaching dams along the Snake River to save salmon. The students chose the topic as their presentation for an Ag Issues competition.

### Simpson visits A.F. to hear FFA presentation

Should dams be breached to save salmon? U.S. Congressman Mike Simpson thinks so, and when the American Falls High School FFA Ag Issues team chose a topic for this year's presentation, Simpson's proposal will be at the heart of their presentation.

Simpson was passionate enough about the subject to accept their request to come and hear their presentation. Simpson and his team came to the American Falls High School library on Wednesday, Feb. 23, to talk watch the presentation and to talk with students about the debate.

FFA advisor Marc Beitia first approached Simpson's office about coming to hear the presentation. But he was surprised that Simpson was willing to make the

trip to hear the presentation himself.

Carter Harrison with Simpson's office said the presentation worked well into the congressman's schedule, and it is something that he is passionate about. Simpson's press secretary, Julia Horman, agreed.

"Since the Columbia Basin Initiative was proposed, it has been important to Congressman Simpson to talk with and learn from others about the issue — including the younger generation. We owe it to them to find a solution, and their input is valuable," Horman said.

Simpson told the students that there is no other workable, long-term solution to saving the salmon on the Snake River. He has

**MIKE SIMPSON**  
 SENIOR DISTRICT 2 REP  
 WASHINGTON OFFICE  
 2212 BUREAU BUILDING  
 WASHINGTON, DC 20515  
 (202) 225-6101  
 FAX: (202) 225-6218

**DISTRICT OFFICE**  
 802 WEST BRANCHED STREET, SUITE 800  
 BOISE, ID 83725  
 (208) 334-1922  
 FAX: (208) 334-9523  
 simpson.house.gov

**CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES**  
 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 21, 2022

Mr. Marc Beitia  
 2966 S Frontage Rd  
 American Falls, ID 83211-5404

Dear Mr. Beitia:

Several weeks ago, I had the privilege of visiting with the FFA students at American Falls High School and listening to their presentation on the issues surrounding the four Lower Snake River dams. This is an accomplished, talented, and professional group, whose thorough presentation reflected an honorable dedication to the assignment.

I was most impressed by the knowledge each of these young students demonstrated. As I have experienced, discussions around the four lower Snake River dams involve a diverse group of stakeholders — each holding a unique and important perspective. These FFA students effortlessly presented, and adequately represented, these perspectives.

Decisions made regarding the four Lower Snake River dams will play an important part in shaping the future of the Pacific Northwest. We must bring people together to have these conversations and propose solutions to ensure that we get to decide what the future of the Pacific Northwest looks like — not a judge. I am grateful to see these young, bright minds joining the conversation.

Sincerely,  
  
 Mike Simpson  
 Member of Congress

MS:CH



*"I was most impressed by the knowledge each of these young students demonstrated. As I have experienced, discussions around the four lower Snake River dams involve a diverse group of stakeholders - each holding a unique and important perspective. These FFA students effortlessly presented, and adequately represented, these perspectives." Representative Mike Simpson*



# THE ISSUE – HAVE WE DAMMED A LEGACY AND OUR FUTURE?



**Governor Brad Little**  
State Capitol • Boise, Idaho 83720  
(208) 334-2100 • gov.idaho.gov

August 24, 2022

Marc Beitia  
Agricultural and Natural Resources Teacher FFA Advisor  
American Falls FFA Chapter

Dear Mr. Beitia,

Thank you for the opportunity to host and observe the American Falls FFA Ag Issues team at my office this summer.

I was very impressed by the team's professionalism and knowledge. The American Falls team has chosen one of the most sensitive and challenging topics in our region – dam breaching. This is a complex topic in any venue, and the team approached the issue with a great deal of care.

They were able to present all sides of the debate not only in an unbiased way but in a way that showed how much work they have done to understand data and nuanced aspects of the issue. These students should be very proud of what they have accomplished already. I could observe their passion for the topic, FFA, and agriculture.

Water is one of our most important resources. Here in Idaho, we have made historic investments in water infrastructure, and all of us must remain committed to the future of water use. I challenge your students to keep learning about this important issue and continue to engage with those who are most impacted.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet your outstanding students. I wish the American Falls FFA team the best of luck at the National Convention, and we are excited to see what they accomplish in the future!

Sincerely,

Brad Little  
Governor of Idaho



*Governor Little states, "I was very impressed by the team's professionalism and knowledge. The American Falls team has chosen one of the most sensitive and challenging topics in our region – dam breaching. This is a complex topic in any venue, and the team approached the issue with a great deal of care. They were able to present all sides of the debate not only in an unbiased way but in a way that showed how much work they have done to understand data and nuanced aspects of the issue."*



THE ISSUE – HAVE WE DAMMED A LEGACY AND OUR FUTURE?

Director Celia Gould, Idaho Department of Agriculture

Forum 8 – 11 attendees

May 19, 2022



Idaho State Department of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 7249 • Boise, Idaho 83707  
P: 208.332.8500 • F: 208.334.2170  
www.agridaho.gov

BRAD LITTLE, GOVERNOR  
CELIA GOULD, DIRECTOR

May 19, 2022

Marc Beitia  
Agricultural and Natural Resources Teacher  
FFA Advisor  
American Falls FFA Chapter

Dear Mr. Beitia,

Thank you for the opportunity to host and observe the American Falls FFA Ag Issues team at the Idaho State Department of Agriculture on May 19, 2020.

Your team has done an incredible job of researching and presenting the dam breaching issue. This is a sensitive and complicated conversation, especially across the Northwest. I appreciate your team's competent and thoughtful approach to the topic.

Agriculture remains Idaho's strongest industry. It accounts for 17 percent of all sales in our state, more than any other single sector, and is the lifeblood of our communities. However, we appreciate the dynamic aspect of water use beyond agriculture. Discussing the management and care of this precious resource is incredibly important, but it's also difficult. Your team approached the issue with exemplary professionalism and passion.

Thank you again for allowing us to hear from the team. Please let us know how we can help and support the American Falls FFA team. Best of luck at the National Convention. We will be cheering you on from home.

Sincerely,  
*Celia R. Gould*  
Celia Gould  
Director

*Director Gould stated, "Your team has done an incredible job of researching and presenting the dam breaching issue. This is a sensitive and complicated conversation, especially across the Northwest. Discussing the management and care of this precious resource is incredibly important, but it's also difficult. Your team approached the issue with exemplary professionalism and passion. I appreciate your team's competent and thoughtful approach to the topic."*





# THE ISSUE – HAVE WE DAMMED A LEGACY AND OUR FUTURE?

**American Falls Lions Club**

**Forum 2 – 13 attendees**

**March 8, 2022**



**AMERICAN FALLS LIONS CLUB**

March 16, 2022

Dear Mr. Beitia and FFA Debate Team

The American Falls Lions Club enjoyed the debate entitled, "Have we dammed a legacy and our future?" presented by the FFA Debate Team at our March 8, 2022 Lions Club Meeting. The title was not only a catchy phrase, but also was used very well to lead into the debate on removing the four lower Snake River dams.

The team is very professional and was extremely well prepared for their debate in this controversial issue. Both sides were very passionate with strong positions both opposing and supporting dam removal. They could easily answer the numerous questions raised from both sides of the aisle with amazing ease. It showed that they had worked very hard in preparation for this difficult and politically sensitive issue.

We have seen the FFA debate team perform in prior years and always thought they were top notch and could not be beat. But each year's team seems to have raised the bar. What a great program to train our next generation of leaders.

It was also a great compliment to the debate team that Congressman Mike Simpson visited their class on this issue of which he has been an integral party to this very controversial issue.

We wish the team all the best in their future endeavors.

Sincerely

Norman Wright,  
American Falls Lions Club Program Director  
1105 Falls Ave.  
American Falls, Idaho 83211  
208-221-5329

**"We have seen the FFA Issues team perform in prior years and always thought they were top notch and could not be beat. But each year's team seems to have raised the bar. What a great program to train our next generation of leaders" Lion Norm Wright**



**Power County Board of Commissioners**

**Forum 3 – 4 attendees**

**March 14, 2022**



**Power County Board Of Commissioners**

Commission Chambers 543 Bannock Ave.  
American Falls, ID 83211

Board Members:  
Ron Funk, Chair (District #1) [rfunk@power.id.us](mailto:rfunk@power.id.us)  
Bill Lasley, (District #2) — [blasley@cc.power.id.us](mailto:blasley@cc.power.id.us)  
Delane Anderson (District #3) [anderson.delano@gmail.com](mailto:anderson.delano@gmail.com)

Website:  
[www.cc.power.id.us](http://www.cc.power.id.us)  
Phone: (208) 226-7610  
Fax: (208) 226-7612

March 16, 2022

Mr. Marc Beitia  
American Falls High School  
American Falls, Idaho

Dear Mr. Beitia,

American Falls High School FFA Agricultural Issue Team appeared before the Power County Board of Commissioners on March 14, 2022. The team presented opposing issues regarding U.S. Congressman Mike Simpson plan to breach the dams on the lower Snake River for the salmon. Topics that include water and protecting an endangered species become very passionate and heated. As the team presented the various interests they were just as passionate, but remained calm and professional. Each member of the team researched and articulate their points of views on why we should support Congressman Simpson plan or oppose it.

Facts presented included; that since the dams were put in place returning native salmon population has been reduced by 90%. Tribal fishing has declined, which tribes felt violated their rights as ensured in treaties. Power Plants are not as effective producing power as believed. Value of the dams for hydro electricity, storage for irrigation and transportation to the sea is necessary. How power companies are active in protecting water ways and habitation. Pros and Cons of the financial impact of acting or not taking action. Billions of dollars are involved either way.

The team also identified possible solutions, some more practical than others but still being solution oriented. We had the opportunity to ask them questions, they responded with timely and logical answers. They asked us how we would vote on this issue? Our board had opposing views and yet we also agreed with them that some form of action was necessary regardless of what it may be to protect the future of this endangered species.

Commissioner Anderson told them that our congressional teams were quite impressed when they presented this same topic to them.

Power County Board of Commissioners wishes the Team the best of luck.

Sincerely,  
  
Bill Lasley  
Power County Commissioner

*"Facts presented included; that since the dams were put in place returning native salmon population has been reduced by 90%. Tribal fishing has declined. The value of the dams for hydroelectricity, storage for irrigation and transportation to the sea is necessary. How power companies are active in protecting water ways and habitat. Pros and Cons of the financial impact of acting or not taking action. Billions of dollars are involved either way," Bill Lasley, Commissioner.*

# THE ISSUE – HAVE WE DAMMED A LEGACY AND OUR FUTURE?

**American Falls Rotary Club**

**Forum 4 – 8 attendees**

**March 16, 2022**

March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2022



Mr. Marc Beitia - FFA Advisor  
 American Falls Scholl District 381  
 827 Fort Hall Ave.  
 American Falls, Idaho 83211

Dear Mr. Beitia,

Thank you for your FFA's Club presentation to the American Falls Rotary Club on the potential removal of the Lower Four Snake River Dams. Once again, your team did an outstanding job of presenting both sides of this issue. Each team member spoke extremely clear and with passion on their side of the issue. We gained knowledge on the pros and cons of dams and the effect they have on wildlife and agriculture.

The American Falls Rotary Club wishes much success to FFA Agricultural Program. We look forward to next year's presentation.

Sincerely,

Annette Colton  
 American Falls Rotary Club  
 Secretary/Treasure



*"The team did an outstanding job of presenting both sides of this issue. Each team member spoke extremely clear and with passion on their side of the issue. We gained knowledge on the pros and cons of dams and the effect they have on wildlife and agriculture," Annette Colton, Rotarian.*

**Power County Farm Bureau**

**Forum 5 – 56 attendees**

**March 16, 2022**



March 21, 2022

To Whom it may concern:



On March 16<sup>th</sup> I listened to the AG Issues presentation of the American Falls High School FFA team regarding Congressman Mike Simpson's plan to breach the four lower Snake River dams. Your team was very well prepared, and each team member gave a concise and professional argument supporting their interest.

I think each team member demonstrated that he/she has done good research to be able to properly argue their position. It is always important to face an important issue such as this with eyes wide open and with enough humility to admit that there is information to be gained that may or may not support our personal position. Keep asking questions to dig deeper into your own side as well as into the opposing side.

For example, it is hard to dispute that the Salmon population is declining – however, the cause of this decline is certainly due to more than one variable. Both those opposed to breaching the dams and those in favor; should explore all the causes of the decline in Salmon survivability. Is it possible that well meaning government might remove the dams and, in the future, discover that the Salmon still do not thrive? On the other hand, for those who oppose replacing the barge system that currently transports agricultural goods to our coast, is it possible that new technologies in transportation might be a superior way to move freight from inland to the coasts?

These are the questions that must be pondered seriously.

I applaud you all for your excellent presentation. I am sure you are on a time limit and perhaps this is why your delivery seemed rushed at times. If you do have more time allotted, rehearse making your case at a slightly slower speed.

Again, I genuinely enjoyed your presentation and I applaud you for your preparation and delivery. All the best to your team!

Sincerely,

Greg Andersen  
 Seagull Bay Dairy, Inc.  
 2549 Lakeview Rd  
 American Falls, ID

*"I think each team member demonstrated that he/she has done good research to be able to properly argue their position. It is always important to face an important issue such as this with eyes wide open and with enough humility to admit that there is information to be gained that may or may not support our personal position. Keep asking questions to dig deeper into your own side as well as into the opposing side," Greg Andersen*



# THE ISSUE – HAVE WE DAMMED A LEGACY AND OUR FUTURE?

## Pocatello Rotary Club

Forum 6 – 72 attendees

March 17, 2022



611 Wilson Avenue, Suite 4A  
Pocatello, ID 83201  
208-235-4270  
www.RaveCommunications.com

March 21, 2022

Mr. Marc Beitia  
Ag/FFA Advisor  
American Falls High School  
2966 S. Frontage Rd.  
American Falls, ID 83211

Mr. Beitia:

I am in the business of clear and compelling communication.

Your FFA Agriculture Issues team gave us a masterful example of that critical and rare skill at last week's meeting of the Pocatello Rotary Club.

I don't think any of us there were prepared for the incredibly polished and sophisticated presentation those young people made. They held the attention of the entire room as they demonstrated mastery of the facts and arguments on both sides of a complicated issue of great importance to the agriculture industry in Idaho: removal of the dams on the Snake River.

Your team displayed great confidence and poise in presenting the pros and cons surrounding the issue, and in enunciating the interests of the different stakeholders involved. They did so with great clarity.

When it was time for questions from the audience, the team members answered some very tough questions with an authority that can only come from the deepest and most thorough preparation.

I know I learned new things about this issue, as did the other Rotarians in attendance.

At one point, each of your students had an opportunity to tell attendees what being on the FFA Agriculture Issues team has meant to them. This experience has been life changing for each of them. It has opened doors to personal growth they didn't know existed before their participation in this activity. What they have learned through this will serve them and society for the rest of their lives.

Our state and the future of the agriculture industry are in good hands.

What a great pleasure their presentation was.

Highest Regards,

Greg Gunter  
President



*"I don't think any of us there were prepared for the incredibly polished and sophisticated presentation those young people made. They held the attention of the entire room as they demonstrated mastery of the facts and arguments on both sides of a complicated issue of great importance to the agriculture industry in Idaho: removal of the dams on the Snake River," Greg Gunter, Pocatello Rotarian*

## Eastern Idaho Fish and Game

Forum 9 – 4 attendees

May 20, 2022



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
SOUTHEAST REGION  
1345 Barton Road  
Pocatello, Idaho 83204

Brod Little / Governor  
Ed Schrieber / Director

June 1, 2022  
Mr. Marc Beitia  
FFA Advisor  
American Falls High School  
2966 S. Frontage Rd.  
American Falls, ID 83211

Dear Mr. Beitia,

On May 19<sup>th</sup> the American Falls High School FFA Agriculture Issues team came to the Fish and Game Southeast Regional Office to deliver a mock debate on the topic of Lower Snake River dam removal. Our staff were very grateful for the opportunity to participate and listen to your students' arguments on the topic. In fact, it was one of the most enjoyable and refreshing moments of my most recent work history and we thank you for making us a part of it. Your students performed impeccably and demonstrated a strong command of their arguments and a deep understanding of the values and facts on either side of the issue. They articulated their points in a clear and professional fashion. This is a multifaceted and politically-charged issue, and your students demonstrated the right sort of awareness and sensitivity to those facts to make their arguments sound and effective. They brought the type of passion and energy to their respective arguments that one might expect from an actual stakeholder, yet fielded questions and accepted feedback with empathetic open minds. I will admit, I did not expect the sort of polished and thoughtful delivery seen from your group—we were certainly impressed. Their ability to conceptualize the issue and bring a willingness to see the world through alternate lenses was amazing; it spoke to their desire to firm up their own arguments by understanding how a broad range of people are affected by the outcome of dam removal in the Snake River basin.

It feels good to see such bright, creative, and skillful young people joining the ranks of society. It is even more encouraging to know that some of the folks on this team may contribute to our public as resource managers one day. Your students bring just the type of healthy and professional dialogue to challenge this tough political issue—dialogue that is sorely needed in a world wrought by rhetoric and a failure to acknowledge nuance. It seems most of society's arguments are kept alive by a failure to acknowledge nuance and the realities of a constantly changing world, a world that changes as values shift and alter the baseline we work upon. There is no doubt that this team is poised to apply thoughtful logic to the challenges our world will face in their lifetimes. Your students are shining stars in our community and I can tell that they recognize the diverse playing field that they're a part of. Moreover, they recognize that progress and policy don't rely on arguments made with false dichotomies and entirely different sets of assumptions. They know that straightforward thinking and recognition of the "flip side of the coin" are what produce outcomes.

I wish you and your team the best of luck as you move forward.

Empowering Idaho's Wildlife Heritage

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*Carson Watkins, Regional Fisheries Manager wrote, "This is a multifaceted and politically-charged issue, and your students demonstrated the right sort of awareness and sensitivity to those facts to make their arguments sound and effective. They brought the type of passion and energy to their respective arguments that one might expect from an actual stakeholder, yet fielded questions and accepted feedback with empathetic open minds."*