

## Mythbusters

### Fish and Wildlife Myths About the Northwest Hydroelectric System

#### Myth No. 2:

Salmon and steelhead  
will recover by removing  
the four Lower  
Snake River dams.  
Ice Harbor Dam on the Lower Snake River.

#### The Facts: A Scientific Overview

..The four Lower Snake River dams affect only  
four of the 13 salmon and steelhead stocks  
in the Columbia River Basin listed under the  
Endangered Species Act (ESA)

Only four salmon and steelhead stocks listed under the ESA  
inhabit the Snake River: spring/summer chinook salmon, fall  
chinook salmon, sockeye salmon and steelhead.

Removing the four dams will not significantly  
improve access to historic salmon and steelhead  
spawning grounds in the Snake River

Construction of the four Lower Snake River dams inundated  
only about 10 percent of available fall chinook habitat in the  
Snake River Basin. The impact on habitat for other salmon  
stocks was even lower. Primary spawning grounds upstream  
from the four dams was blocked by older dams or affected by  
logging, mining and water diversion before the Lower Snake  
River dams were built.

..Removing the four dams will not provide  
significantly higher fish survival

The Lower Snake River dams are run-of-the-river dams. They  
do not affect the volume of water in the river. Juvenile and  
adult fish readily pass these dams. The survival rate of juvenile  
salmon and steelhead passing the dams is near or above

95 percent. Surface bypass systems have been installed at three  
of the four dams, with the fourth dam scheduled for a bypass  
system installation in 2009. The goal of the bypass systems is to  
increase the juvenile survival rate.

..Removing the four dams will negatively affect  
the Northwest's economy and environment

Removal of the Lower Snake River dams will eliminate their  
emissions-free, renewable energy; increase carbon dioxide  
pollution through replacement power, which likely will be fossil

fuel generation; eliminate millions of dollars worth of cargo transportation on the inland waterway; and reduce farmers' ability to produce crops because of lost irrigation.

..Fish and wildlife agencies annually receive millions of dollars from the region's ratepayers to fund mitigation projects

>From 1978 through 2007, the Bonneville Power Administration distributed nearly \$2.3 billion to the region's fish and wildlife agencies for fish mitigation projects. The Northwest Power and Conservation Council found that only about 60 percent of the funds provided to the states and tribes was used to help fish and wildlife resources via on-the-ground projects.

..Read more about fish and wildlife myths at

[www.ruralite.org/mythbusters](http://www.ruralite.org/mythbusters)

Source: Public Power Council, based on research collected from state and federal agencies, universities and the private sector.

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