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HOUSE JOINT MEMORIAL 4010

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State of Washington

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By Representatives G. Chandler, Grant, Mastin, Linville, Clements, Lisk, Delvin, B. Chandler, Cox, Schoesler, Sump, Mitchell, Huff, McDonald, Mulliken, McMorris, Kessler, Buck, Reardon, Hatfield, Radcliff, D. Sommers, Edwards, Thomas, Ogden, Bush, Hankins, Skinner, Koster and Dunn

Read first time 02/10/1999. Referred to Committee on Agriculture & Ecology.

1 TO THE HONORABLE WILLIAM J. CLINTON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED  
2 STATES, AND TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE  
3 OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF  
4 THE UNITED STATES, IN CONGRESS ASSEMBLED:

5 We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of  
6 the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled, respectfully  
7 represent and petition as follows:

8 WHEREAS, The federally owned or licensed dams on the Snake and  
9 Columbia rivers in this state provide the fundamental building blocks  
10 that support the northwest way of life; and

11 WHEREAS, The dams provide the electrical power that fuels one of  
12 the greatest economies in the nation and do so without contributing the  
13 air pollution faced by expanding economies elsewhere; and

14 WHEREAS, The dams provide their electrical power at a cost that  
15 attracts the type of high-paying industrial jobs that support families  
16 and communities; and

17 WHEREAS, The dams provide their electrical power at a cost that is  
18 affordable by all of its citizens, a situation enjoyed almost nowhere  
19 else; and

20 WHEREAS, The dams provide a river route to eastern Washington for  
21 ships and barges and for allowing commodities and goods from the

1 eastern part of the state, as well as potato products from southern  
2 Idaho, bentonite from Wyoming, talc from Montana, grain from the  
3 Dakotas, and lumber from Canada to compete in the world economy; and

4 WHEREAS, By allowing these commodities and goods to move on the  
5 river system, the dams relieve the state's highway system of the  
6 incredibly expensive job of accommodating the truck and other traffic  
7 needed to support that commerce; and

8 WHEREAS, Some have nonetheless asked that dams on the system be  
9 breached to allow a more natural operation of the river to accommodate  
10 fish runs; and

11 WHEREAS, In 1995, the United States Army Corps of Engineers  
12 examined a wide range of options for operating the Columbia and Snake  
13 River basin to enhance anadromous fish runs and compared the costs and  
14 benefits of thirteen of these options; and

15 WHEREAS, One of the options examined was a "natural river" option  
16 for the Snake River in which the water levels at the four lower Snake  
17 River dams would be lowered to nearly river bed levels year-round and  
18 the water in the John Day Dam on the Columbia River would be lowered to  
19 the dam's minimum dam pool; and

20 WHEREAS, Although the Corps' 1995 study was for only one part of  
21 the system, the lower Snake River dams, its findings provide a warning  
22 that applies to all dams in the system; and

23 WHEREAS, The Corps found benefits to fish runs for the "natural  
24 river" option that merely approximate juvenile fish survival under  
25 other options that involve fish transport rather than breaching dams,  
26 and it also found the costs of such a dam-breaching option to be  
27 staggering; and

28 WHEREAS, The Corps found the costs of this Snake River option in  
29 electrical power alone to be in the range of one hundred thirty-two to  
30 one hundred sixty-seven million dollars annually; and

31 WHEREAS, The Corps found the cost to shallow draft transportation  
32 of thirty million to over thirty-seven million dollars annually; an  
33 increase in the cost of pumping municipal and industrial water of  
34 approximately four and one-half million dollars annually and a like  
35 increase in the cost of pumping irrigation water; and an annualized  
36 cost of forty-five million dollars just to implement the changes at the  
37 Snake River dams and the John Day Dam that would be necessary for such  
38 a "natural operation" of the river; and

1       WHEREAS, A follow-up to the Corps' study being conducted by a  
2 federally convened drawdown regional economic work group may find that  
3 the Corps' cost estimates are too low, with more recent estimates of  
4 the power costs in the two hundred million dollars per year range and  
5 increased costs to irrigators at ten million dollars per year; and

6       WHEREAS, These costs would be borne by the people of Washington in  
7 very real ways, with over four thousand jobs lost in this state alone  
8 and dramatic increases in power and transportation costs; and

9       WHEREAS, Any such breach-the-dams option would even damage the  
10 region's ability to repay its debt to the federal government for the  
11 Columbia and Snake River system by reducing the power revenues of the  
12 Bonneville Power Administration used to repay that debt;

13       NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully pray that the  
14 federal government acknowledge that breaching dams on the main stem of  
15 the Columbia or Snake rivers or operating these dams under a natural  
16 river operating system would not be more effective than other options  
17 for enhancing anadromous fish runs and that these other options can be  
18 implemented without the staggering costs to the region caused by the  
19 dam breaching option, and pray that the federal government no longer  
20 consider breaching these dams as a productive option for enhancing  
21 anadromous fish stocks.

22       BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately  
23 transmitted to the Honorable William J. Clinton, President of the  
24 United States, the President of the United States Senate, the Speaker  
25 of the House of Representatives, and each member of Congress from the  
26 State of Washington.

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