

Testimony submitted by  
Congressman Les AuCoin  
March 30, 1977  
in support of funding for  
Corps of Engineer's Lower  
Snake River Compensation Plan

Mr. Chairman:

One of the great pleasures of living in the Pacific Northwest has always been its plentiful fishing resources. Indeed, the proud steelhead fighting its way up the Columbia is often reatured as a symbol of the bounty and the beauty of our region.

Today that steelhead is literally fighting for its life. Federal dams on the Snake and Columbia Rivers have threatened to deplete these stocks to the point of extinction.

That's why I'm here today. I'm here to ask your help in preserving this great resource by appropriating \$1.5 million for Fiscal Year 1978 to enable the Corps of Engineers to begin construction of eight hatcheries on the Lower Snake River.

These hatcheries, authorized by the Water Resource Development Act of 1976 in what is known as the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan, are desperately needed. The Administration chose not to include funds for this project in its budget. Therefore, its up to you. Without your assistance, hatchery construction will be delayed and the fish runs will continue to decline -- perhaps to irrevocable levels.

I have seen personally what federal dams have done to the salmon and steelhead runs in the Northwest.

At one time fish spawning in the Lower Snake contributed heavily to the Columbia River sport, commercial and Indian fisheries and to the Pacific Ocean sport and commercial fisheries. Not so any more. The summer chinook run has not reproduced itself for 10 years. As a result, significant fishing of that species is no longer allowed.

Snake River fall chinook are on the verge of extinction. Nearly all fishing on spring chinook and summer steelhead has been prohibited for the past three years due to the depletion of these runs.

The economic impact of these events--both on producers and consumers -- has been awesome. Fisheries agencies estimate that losses to commercial fishermen amount to about 4.2 million pounds annually and losses to sport fishermen amount to

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almost 750,000 days annually. The combined annual dollar loss stands at approximately \$10.8 million. From the consumer's standpoint--anyone who likes salmon doesn't have to be told how much the price of it has gone up over the past 10 years!

Our pocketbooks are not the only thing that's been affected. The social impact has been equally traumatic. I'm sure you are familiar with the order of Federal Court Judge Robert Belloni which allocated 50 percent of the fish in the Columbia River to Indian treaty tribes, causing extreme tension and hostility among user groups. I happen to believe that there never would have been a Belloni decision had fish runs in the Columbia River been at historic levels. There would have been fish enough for all.

The problems caused by federal dams extend far beyond the Rivers, and touch many lives. Until the Federal government moves to rectify a situation -- which it caused in the first place -- the problems will not be resolved. The fish runs will continue to decline. Regional producers and national consumers will continue to suffer. A great resource will be lost.

For this reason I urge you to appropriate the full \$1.5 million to enable the Corps to begin immediate work on the Lower Snake River Compensation Plan.