

April 3, 2023

My name is Peter Schrappen. I serve as the Vice President of the American Waterways Operators and am based in Seattle. AWO is the tugboat, towboat, and barge industry's advocate, resource, and united voice for safe, sustainable, and efficient transportation on America's waterways, oceans, and coasts. Our industry safely and efficiently moves over 665 million tons of cargo each year.

On behalf of our members, I am speaking up for the importance of the Lower Snake River Dams.

On the Columbia Snake River System, barges and towing vessels move agricultural products for export and energy cargoes for use in the basin. Tugboats also perform shipdocking, tanker escort and bunkering services at deep-draft ports on the Columbia River. Barges and towing vessels help move 8.5 million tons of cargo every year on the Columbia Snake River System, improving safety, reducing congestion on highways and railroads, and emitting significantly less greenhouse gases than other modes – rail emits 43% more and trucks emit 832% more.

The loss of the Lower Snake River dams (LSRDs) would devastate regional and national food security, the supply chain, and clean energy generation. Additionally, removing the dams would have a negative impact on climate change. Removing the Lower Snake River Dams would shut down the barge and towing companies that have operated on the Columbia-Snake River System (CSRS) safely for generations.

This loss would harm mariners and their families who rely on the living-wage careers the industry provides; local communities that would bear the burden of increased air pollution from rail and truck; and the industries that rely on the safest, most environmentally friendly, and least expensive way to transport goods, such as agricultural exports. As you heard from the two speakers ago in Stacey Satterlee, the Columbia Snake River System is vital for wheat growers, with over 60% of Washington wheat and 10 percent of all U.S. wheat flowing down this river to the West Coast ports for export.

With respect to salmon survival rates, there is no concrete, peer-reviewed science that shows removing the Lower Snake River Dams – which currently have world-class fish passage and juvenile survival rates upwards of 95% – will quantifiably improve salmon returns. Multiple studies by federal agencies charged with salmon recovery confirm that many factors contribute to the decline in fish runs (like climate change), and that dam breaching is not supported by best available science.

As I finish here, I would pose a question: if the dams are breached, where are we going to find the 80,000 needed truck drivers to haul the cargo that now finds itself barged and how is our climate going to accommodate this influx of new greenhouse gases that come with rail and road?