



SAMMAMISH YOUTH BOARD FOR LOWER SNAKE RIVER DAM REMOVAL

For the past half-century, four dams on the lower Snake River in southeastern Washington have obstructed wild salmon and steelhead migration routes from Idaho to the Pacific. Since their construction, adult salmon and steelhead returns to the Snake River to spawn have dropped from nearly [130,000 annually to under 10,000](#). Today, Snake River salmon are fast approaching extinction, a threat to many Pacific Northwest communities, including, notably, several Indigenous tribes within and surrounding the Columbia Basin. The endangerment of wild Snake River salmon has already led to steep declines in the populations of numerous regionally endemic species as well, including the Southern Resident Orcas. Without the urgent removal of the lower Snake River dams, restoration of the Snake River and the recovery of these salmon populations is improbable at best.

The lower Snake River dams do not meet our standards for a clean energy future. Energy that comes at the cost of a keystone species is not “clean” by any reasonable standard. Clean energy is about more than greenhouse gas emissions alone. Speaking as the youth who will inherit this planet, climate change will affect none more than us, yet we recognize that this situation is not a tradeoff between the survival of Snake River salmon and a livable future. Replacing the lower Snake River dams with truly clean energy alternatives in other locations will allow for both the survival of this species and renewable energy for our state. To call these existing dams sources of clean energy for our region is misleading at best, and untruthful at worst.

This ongoing ecological disaster has proved devastating to those in our own communities, as well as Native communities across the Pacific Northwest. The cultural and economic significance of wild Snake River salmon far pre-dates colonization. This summer, Northwest Tribes called for the removal of the lower Snake River dams in an [Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians’ resolution](#), and we stand by their call to restore the river and its salmon populations to pre-dam levels. It is long past time that our elected officials stand with Northwest tribes. By failing to adequately restore the lower Snake River, those in positions of political power are actively stripping the Indigenous peoples of the Pacific Northwest of their cultural identities. This consequence alone should be enough to mandate change, and yet thus far the calamitous impacts of the lower Snake River dams have been remorselessly swept under the rug.

We applaud the declared commitment of a handful of Northwest government leaders to deliver an action plan for the recovery of endangered salmon and salmon-dependent orcas. Such a plan, to be both legal and effective, must include breaching the lower Snake River dams, replacing the power the dams provide with truly clean energy, and making investments in irrigation and transportation infrastructure to replace the agricultural services the dams provide. It is imperative that other Northwest political representatives join them in crafting a comprehensive solution that works for salmon and orcas, for farmers and fishermen, and for Tribes and utilities.

We, the undersigned youth of the State of Washington, as the inheritors of this Earth and the future of this country, stand in solidarity with all efforts to breach the lower Snake River dams and restore wild salmon populations. We demand the appropriate actions to be taken to meet this objective, and further demand a guarantee of sufficient new clean energy sources to replace and exceed all energy needs currently met by these dams. Our salmon are out of time.



Maanit Goel
Chair, Sammamish Youth Board

The Sammamish Youth Board is an official City of Sammamish Board, representing youth voices in Sammamish. The Sammamish City Council supports the Sammamish Youth Board in advocating their stance regarding the lower Snake River dams.