

My name is Rich Garber. I serve as the Government Affairs Director for the Idaho Grain Producers Association. IGPA represents Idaho's wheat and barley farmers with production in 42 of Idaho's 44 Counties.

About half of the wheat grown in Idaho is exported and the primary gateway for our wheat is through Portland. In addition to Idaho wheat approximately 10% of all wheat grown in the United States moves through the Snake River dams.

It is vital that we keep our river transportation system in place. Having the ability to import and export commodities via the river system is a benefit now and will continue to be a significant asset into the future. In fact, as environmental issues become increasingly more critical this transportation system may become even more significant.

Barging is one of the lowest cost, most environmentally friendly modes of transportation available. In a world striving to reduce carbon emissions it seems only logical that we should transport more, not less, goods by environmentally friendly methods like barging.

It also makes little sense to eliminate such a clean, non-polluting energy source. About two thirds of the regions electricity comes from hydropower. The dams complement other renewables such as wind and solar by balancing the load through the grid when those sources are not producing. Only hydropower can store energy in the reservoirs and provide it when demanded for power peaking and to meet the load on the Northwest power grid.

We are all concerned about the Northwest's salmon populations. However, it is shortsighted to suggest the removal of the lower Snake River dams would solve the problems these species face and restore runs to historic levels.

Rather than a narrow focus on dam removal we encourage a more holistic and balanced approach that preserves the multiuse river system, and the benefits it brings. Opting to remove the dams would not only set Idaho and our region back but there are no guarantees salmon populations would see a substantial benefit from such a drastic and costly measure.

Some people want to measure the value of the Columbia and Snake Rivers in numbers of fish. But the impact of the Columbia and Snake Rivers on the Pacific Northwest - and the rest of the nation – isn't only about numbers, or about fish but about the people who live and work in the region, all of whom rely on the rivers for their livelihoods.