

Alternative energy source: Hydroelectric power
Stakeholder: Salmon fisher

My name is Captain Tom Nelson and I am a salmon fisherman on the Columbia River in Oregon. I run a school (Salmon University), which teaches and trains people to fish. I have been a fisherman for over 25 years and I have seen the decline of salmon along the Columbia River. The fish ladders that they have constructed on the Bonneville Lock and Dam are often ineffective. Also, each year many fish get caught in the turbines and are killed. Salmon need the river to survive. Juvenile salmon and steelhead use the entire river ecosystem, from headwaters to the ocean. They are extremely sensitive to changes in water quality. Juvenile salmonids feed on freshwater invertebrates that are also indicators of water quality. Generally, the more pristine, diverse and productive the freshwater ecosystem is, the healthier the salmon stocks. Wild salmon is being replaced by farmed salmon and that reduces genetic diversity of the fish. Fisheries biologists estimate that before the late 19th century, between 8 and 16 million salmon migrated up the Columbia and Snake rivers every year. Today, however, only 2.5 million fish return. I believe that the only way the fish populations will increase and continue to provide a necessary food source and economic resource for the people in the region is to take out the Bonneville Dam.