I urge you to support breaching the dams on the Lower Snake River and support investing in local communities. We have not done everything possible to save these fish. Dam breaching is our only hope of restoring salmon runs.

The economic impact of losing the runs is huge. The salmon and steelhead economy contributes an estimated $8.6 million per month to north central Idaho’s economy.

The dams violate the Endangered Species Act as noted by the US District Judge Michael Simon in 2016. He ordered the US Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps and the BPA to study new alternatives to protect threatened and endangered fish.

The western energy market has undergone dramatic and permanent changes since 2008. Natural gas, wind and solar farms have become commonplace along with conservation and efficiency, and most planners believe market energy prices in the PNW will continue to fall. BPA has maintained relatively low power prices by selling surplus power on the open market, much of it to California, although California is no longer in need of such power.

Actual production from natural gas and wind in 2016 totaled 6,127 MW or six times the average annual LSR dam production over the past dozen years. The average annual production of all four LSR dams over the past 14 years is 943 megawatts.

The dams are aging. Nine of the 24 turbines in the LSRD are reaching their life expectancies, and 22 of them will have exceeded their life expectancies by 2025. BPA and PUD cost estimates for turbine rehabilitations are currently in the range of $36-$45 million each. The cost to BPA, PUD customers, and ratepayers indicates that we can no longer afford to keep LSRDs.

Under the Northwest Power Act, The BPA must mitigate the debilitating effects of its dam system on salmon and steelhead runs. BPA has spent more than $15 Billion the past two decades on fish recovery, and salmon populations are plummeting. The BPA is projected to decrease the amount of spending for fish mitigation even further from $300 million to $270 million. And, the BPA is scheduled to commit another $500 million during the next 20 years toward the LSRDs.

The LSRDs produce approximately 4% of the PNW electricity in a region with a 17% energy surplus. Over 50% of the LSRD’ hydropower is produced during the 4 months of the year with the least demand and lowest prices. Surplus hydropower cannot be stored and is frequently dumped on the market. Power produced by the LSRDs is surplus power.

The long term freight volume on the LSR has decreased by 71% from 2014 – 2017. Today grain makes up about 90% of all LSR waterborne freight, and rail and trucks can now transport it.

Removing the Lower Snake River Dams is the best option for restoring fish runs and riparian systems, upholding treaty obligations, and supporting our local recreational fishing economy.