

Fish-and-Dams Agreement Reached for Snake River

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WASHINGTON — A major concession to fishing interests by the federal government's two dam building agencies, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Corps of Engineers, is in the works calling for:

1. A ban on dams of any sort on the Salmon River in northern Idaho where a major portion of migrating salmon go to spawn.
2. A ban on projects rising higher than 100 feet from the bed of the Snake River below the confluence of the Salmon River.

The plan would allow all dams built in the lower Columbia, lower Snake and middle Snake up to the

Salmon River to be equipped with fish passage facilities that would assure the maintenance of at least a part of existing fish runs.

Nez Perce Is Out

The plan scraps plans to construct an 813-foot high dam at Nez Perce, a site on the Snake just below the mouth of the Salmon where such a monumental structure would block migrations beyond that point either up the Salmon or Snake rivers.

The outlines of this planned concession to continued salmon production in the Columbia basin are to be embodied in a report from the Reclamation Bureau and the Army Engineers that is scheduled to be sent to Congress the first of the year.

Congress ordered a report on up-to-date surveys of sites in the Snake River basin suitable for new storage dams.

The Bureau plans to report favorably on one major multi-purpose project, Mountain Sheep, which is to be offered as a substitute for the discarded Nez Perce. The Bureau has picked a new site for a Mountain Sheep dam about five miles up the Snake from the mouth of the Salmon River.

Suitable to Either Plan

Mountain Sheep is not being considered an alternative to high Hells Canyon dam, but would be integrated with high Hells Canyon dam or with Idaho Power Co.'s three smaller dams in the same area, depending on the outcome of that dispute.

Built with high Hells Canyon, Mountain Sheep would provide a total energy supply of 264,000 KW prime power; and with the three private dams 387,000 KW. If designed to fit with the big dam, it would cost \$304,970,000 and with the small dams \$358,253,000.

With the Bureau proposing to build Mountain Sheep, it would have an Idaho irrigation project tied into it financially, just as the Bureau's Hells Canyon project included a power subsidy for the Mountain Home irrigation project in southern Idaho. But no specific irrigation project is to be mentioned by the Bureau in its report.

The proposed Mountain Sheep dam itself would be less costly than the one outlined by the Army in previous surveys, for the new site selected has been found capable of supporting an arch dam (like Boulder) which would preclude use of a gravity dam (like Grand Coulee) which is more expensive by some 10 per cent.

Two Storage Units Out

The ban on projects in the Salmon River would presumably have no effect on completion of the main control plan for the Columbia River basin, but it would cut out two future prospects for large storage dams—Freedom and Crevice—plus a series of smaller dams in the upper reaches of the Salmon River and its tributaries.

While the Salmon is to be kept clear for fish, the nearby Clearwater River is to be developed by the Corps of Engineers, according to present plan. The best site at Kooskia is being abandoned, because it would flood out towns and roads, but the Army is expected to report favorably on Penney Cliffs and Bruce's Eddy sites.

Only major change on the Snake River itself, other than elimination of Nez Perce, would be a series of smaller dams just above Lewiston instead of the Asotin project which was to have been 235-feet high. All of the previously authorized dams in the lower Snake—Ice Harbor, Little Goose, Lower Monumental, Lower Granite—are less than the proposed ceiling height of 100 feet and fully designed to pass fish successfully up toward their spawning haunts in the Salmon River.