



The Columbian

In Our View: Down With The Dam

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By the Columbian editorial writers

Removing 92-year-old Condit Dam from the White Salmon River remains a great idea for both natural and recreational reasons.

Unfortunately, a recent study released by the Washington Department of Ecology said that breaching the dam would release enough sediment to threaten endangered species of fish in the White Salmon and Columbia rivers.

Still, the PacifiCorp utility company's proposal to breach the dam is endorsed by many environmental groups.

And who could blame them? Long-term benefits could be great. According to Thomas O'Keefe of American Whitewater, removing the dam is the best strategy for restoring fish populations on the river that divides Skamania and Klickitat counties. O'Keefe believes dam removal would "restore several cultural salmon fishing sites that have been used by (the) Yakama Nation and other tribes ... provide increased whitewater recreation opportunities ... linking the upstream scenic river setting to the scenic gorge area downstream through the canyon now occupied by Northwestern Lake."

And as Kathie Durbin reported in Saturday's Columbian, Brent Foster of the activist group Columbia Riverkeeper has said that removing the dam would "impact fish and water quality, but in the long term, the benefits are going to radically outweigh the short-term costs. Condit Dam is a dam that is long past its useful life."

Here's hoping that PacifiCorp's plan to bring down the dam in 2008 can resume after examination by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and other agencies. It's the right place, and the right time, to breach a dam.