



# The Enterprise

220 Jewett Blvd, PO Box 218, White Salmon, WA 98672, Phone: 509.493.2112

## Article on Condit Dam needs clarification

The recent article by Jesse Burkhardt (“WDOE details tradeoffs if Condit Dam removed,” April 7) requires clarification.

As the retired Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife habitat manager of the area for over 22 years, and as the WDFW representative on the Condit negotiating team, I am familiar with the system and the issues at hand.

The FEIS’s statement that removal of the dam could result in “32 miles of new steelhead habitat” is not accurate, but neither is Jim Rhoads’ figure of “10 or 11 miles of restored habitat.” The best estimates range between 19 and 26 miles of restored habitat, including several tributaries. The difference depends on the definition of “available habitat” in Rattlesnake Creek. The smaller estimate excludes habitat above a partial barrier low in the drainage; the upper estimate includes habitat above that barrier. USGS fisheries biologists, who probably know that tributary better than anyone, feel that the barrier will not exclude steelhead.

The elevated turbidity levels in the Bonneville Pool after removal of Condit Dam are overemphasized. These turbidity levels will still be relatively small compared with turbidity levels during the usual spring runoff, when the Palouse and other upstream “rivers of mud” are pumping their annual loads into the Columbia system.

Rhoads also stated that the White Salmon below the dam would become a “mud flat” and would remain that way until it was dredged. He overlooks the river’s natural self cleansing abilities, which will resume as soon as the dam is removed. Eventually the fines will be washed downstream to the Columbia, which is perfectly capable of handling whatever the White Salmon can throw its way.

Removal of the dam will also mean restoration of the natural spawning gravels from above the dam, something that will never happen as long as the dam remains in place.

Over time, the river will heal itself - if the dam is removed. Until that happens, the lower reach will continue to deteriorate as the last of the spawning gravel slowly bleeds out of the system. Then you can kiss Jim Rhoads’ “world-class fishery” goodbye.

Carl Dugger  
Washougal