

# Transportation Impacts of Lower Snake Dams Removal

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Why are you conducting this study?

The Snake River from Clarkston to Pasco contains four dams (Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose and Lower Granite). There has been much interest in removal of these dams for the benefit of salmon, steelhead, Pacific lamprey, bull trout, sturgeon and other native fish species. While there have been several studies that address the topic of removing the dams, there is limited understanding of how transportation must change to allow freight and goods to continue to move through Eastern Washington.

The Legislature has directed WSDOT to conduct an analysis of highway, road and freight rail transportation needs, options and impacts of shifting the movement of freight and goods that currently move by barge to truck and rail. This study will fulfill that request by the Legislature.

### Why are transportation impacts important to consider on the Lower Snake?

Currently, large quantities of freight and goods move by barge through the Lower Snake River dams. Several industries, especially the agricultural sector, have relied on barge transportation for decades. If the dams are removed, this mode of transportation will be unavailable. The study will consider impacts from, and options for, shifting the movement of freight and goods from barges to highways, other roads, and rail.

### What type of analysis will be included in the study?

The study will generate volume estimates and evaluate scenarios for changes in infrastructure and operations that would be necessary to address those additional volumes. The assessment includes quantitative analysis based on available data in terms of both financial and carbon emission costs. A robust and inclusive public engagement process will be conducted to solicit feedback from agency partners, Tribes, key interested parties, and community members.

### Does the WSDOT want the dams removed?

WSDOT is neutral with respect to whether the dams stay or are removed. This study was commissioned by the Washington State Legislature to get a clear understanding of the transportation impacts IF the dams were removed. WSDOT does not and will not support either side of the argument. We understand that this issue is very near to the hearts of many individuals. We will respect that while remaining neutral and committed to fulfilling the legislative direction for purpose of the study.

### Will you be considering Greenhouse Gas Emissions in your study?

We will be considering greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in our computations associated with movement of goods and construction.

Our calculations for goods movement will include considerations for GHGs created by trains, barges, and trucks as products are moved to their destination. Goods movement will assume the current GHG emissions of the existing barges, trucks, and locomotives over a 20-year period. The WSDOT cannot predict the industry change in emissions that may occur over the next 20 years. As a result, our report will list the GHG emissions by transport type, allowing for adjustment to these numbers if the industry improves their GHG emissions.

Construction calculations will consider the GHG emissions created by the physical construction of the infrastructure improvements needed to accommodate changes and shifts in transportation. They will not consider the GHG emissions of the actual dam removal. The GHG emissions calculations will also focus on the trucks and support vehicles needed to conduct the constructions of the improvements. It will be assumed these improvements will happen sooner rather than later. Therefore, we will again utilize the most up to date GHG emissions data for trucks, construction equipment, and support vehicles.

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## What will you do for Environmental Justice and Underserved Communities?

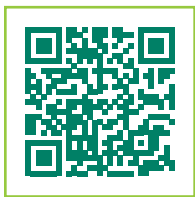
Our plan for engaging the public in the study is consistent with WSDOT's Community Engagement Plan, the WSDOT Limited English Proficiency Accessibility Plan, and the Environmental Justice guidance of both the HEAL Act and the Environmental Justice Council.

The project team is committed to engagement that reaches communities who are directly impacted by their work and emphasizes reaching people that have not been historically represented in agency decision-making. The project team defines equity as understanding and implementing practices that all community members, specifically those from Overburdened Communities and Vulnerable Populations have equal and meaningful opportunities to participate in and benefit from this project.

To ensure that the team is taking an equitable approach, the team will look at demographic responses from surveys distributed during the project and adjust engagement approaches as needed. The team will also look at the number of engagement events held in areas and neighborhoods where these communities gather to ensure a broad reach for engagement activities. Engagement efforts will especially focus on communities and entities who have been overlooked in previous studies such as rural and tribal communities.

## How do I stay informed about what is going on with the study?

We have three ways.



First is an email distribution list through GovDelivery. Emails will go out at least

quarterly and when we have planned community engagement events or draft/final reports. You may sign up to receive project updates via GovDelivery by visiting [tinyurl.com/2hbbyzfm](https://tinyurl.com/2hbbyzfm) or by scanning the QR code above.

We will also be regularly updating our project website. Access the page by visiting [tinyurl.com/5edffxux](https://tinyurl.com/5edffxux) or by scanning the QR code below.



Lastly, if you are unable to access the electronic communication options or need translation services, please contact project lead Jim Mahugh:

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## Will you be considering multimodal impacts?

This study will consider changes in freight modes of transportation. Impact to other modes will be considered at locations where the study determines an improvement will be needed because of the change in freight. Otherwise, the study will not include analysis of areas that are currently in need of multimodal improvements.

## What about safety?

The study will consider the safety impacts to all modes due to significant changes in truck and train traffic. However, the study will not give an assessment of the safety performance of the existing transportation system.

## When will your study be done?

The legislature has requested that the final report be completed by December 2026. We will meet that deadline. The study also includes an interim report that will be presented to the Legislature in December 2024.

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