



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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SECRETARY SEATON URGES FURTHER STUDY BEFORE PROPOSED SNAKE RIVER DAM WORK

Secretary of the Interior Fred A. Seaton said today that no additional dam construction on the Middle Snake River below the mouth of the Imnaha River should be considered until the possibilities of providing additional water storage elsewhere have been fully explored.

Secretary Seaton made the statement in a letter this week to Secretary of the Army Wilber M. Brucker in which he pointed out that the Middle Snake River Basin, up to and including the watershed of the Imnaha River, an Oregon tributary, is the only remaining Columbia Basin area for the production of anadromous fish.

Specifically, Secretary Seaton stressed the problem of passing anadromous fish over high dams, both upstream and downstream.

He pointed out that the Department of the Interior, with help from the U. S. Corps of Engineers, has been advancing biological and engineering research on this matter; that while considerable progress has been made there remains much to learn before the problem can be successfully met; that even after solving the fish passage problem there remains the loss of spawning and rearing areas as a result of flooding by the reservoirs.

Secretary Seaton's letter was based upon an understanding that the Corps of Engineers is presently considering a number of dams on the Middle Snake River below the confluence of the Imnaha, an area which Seaton describes as essential to the Columbia River fishery and one which the Nation can not afford to sacrifice at this time.

Interior studies to date, made by the Bureau of Reclamation, though preliminary in nature, indicate that there are storage sites above the Imnaha of considerable potential which can be developed now. Secretary Seaton said he was advised that these reservoirs, taken together with other projects in the general area which can be undertaken after the fish-passage problem is satisfactorily solved, will meet the objective of full comprehensive development.

Secretary Seaton recommended that the Department of the Army join with the Department of the Interior in the adoption of a firm policy of "orienting our planning for the undoubted water-control needs of the Pacific Northwest" to areas other than this critical portion of the Middle Snake River unless specifically required by the Congress, until "we can be sure we will not needlessly harm the vital fishery resources", for "once this resource is destroyed it will be difficult if not impossible to restore it for a particular stream or river basin" even with future development of satisfactory fish-passage facilities.

A copy of Secretary Seaton's letter to Secretary Brucker is attached.

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