

PRESS RELEASE

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Columbia Grain™
CULTIVATING GROWTH™

Columbia Grain International Says Removing the Snake River Dams will have Devasting Effects on American Farmers, Rural Communities, and the Agriculture Industry

PORTLAND, OR (AUGUST 2022) — [Columbia Grain International](https://www.columbiagrains.com) has been cultivating high quality crops from its network of 8,000 farmers across the northern tier of the United States to nourish the world safely since 1978. At a time of unprecedented supply chain disruption, inflation, severe logistical challenges, labor shortages, and the threat of food insecurity, compromising waterways like the Columbia Snake River System will only result in further turmoil. CGI believes increased transportation costs, the loss of jobs, farmable land, and agricultural inputs, not to mention higher costs for farmers and consumers are imminent.

“We need to keep the lower Snake River dams. It’s the top wheat export gateway in the nation and the third largest grain export corridor in the world,” said the CEO & President of Columbia Grain International, Jeff Van Pevenage. “If farmers and the export industry in the Pacific Northwest lose this critical barge shipping route, there will further strain on an already broken supply chain.”

The Snake River Dams support over 60% of all wheat exports out of the PNW area, or between 80 million bushels (mb) to 100 mb annually. According to the National Association of Wheat Growers, a single four-barge tow carrying wheat moves the equivalent of 538 semi-trucks and is the lowest cost shipping option. Removing the dams will likely lead to higher rail costs.

Statistics from the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association detail the problems that will result from shifting from barge to road in commodity crop transportation. Dam breaching is expected to require at least 201 additional unit trains and 23.8 million miles in additional trucking activity annually. The increased trucking activity will increase fuel costs, highway maintenance costs, terminal facility maintenance cost, driver time, and vehicle maintenance costs by over \$69 million per year. Switching from barge to rail and truck will increase CO2 and other harmful emissions by over 1,251,000 tons per year. Highway, rail, grain elevators, and local infrastructure network will need over \$1 billion in capital investment. If breaching occurred and farm subsidies are not increased, devastating impacts could occur as 1,100 farms may be at risk of bankruptcy.



According to coverage in *The Spokesman-Review*, removing the dams would hike average transportation costs by 33%.¹ The results are far reaching; farmers would have to cover these costs, jobs would be lost, agriculture output will drop, and consumer costs will rise.

Furthermore, farmable land acreage will decrease if the dams are breached as this land relies on irrigation from the river, meaning food production will go down and new irrigation systems will need to be strategized and implemented.

Additionally, removing the four giant hydroelectric dams on the lower Snake River would be expensive and finding other ways to provide electricity, irrigation and enabling commerce would cost between \$10.3 billion and \$27.2 billion.

“Hydroelectric dams, navigation locks, and salmon can and do co-exist,” said Van Pevenage. “The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers just released statistics for the year and we had the best Sockeye salmon return on record at Bonneville and the highest return for sockeye to Lower Granite since 1962. We believe that there needs to be a solution that balances the needs of all stakeholders to address the many challenges to salmon throughout their lifecycle. Dam breaching is a simplistic and extreme concept that does not fully address the problem.”

“The Columbia Snake River System has successfully served our communities for over 40 years, providing our regions with clean power, jobs, efficient transportation, irrigation, flood control, and more,” Van Pevenage continues. “We are committed to cultivating the continued growth of our farmers and our PNW communities to ensure the world continues to receive a steady flow of grains and pulses.”

To coordinate an interview with Jeff Van Pevenage, please contact Christina Madrid at Christina@christieand.co or (818)-621-1897.

About Columbia Grain International

Since 1978, Columbia Grain International™ (CGI) has been *Cultivating Growth™* as a global leader in the origination, processing, logistics, and distribution of high-quality bulk grains, pulses, edible beans, oilseeds and organics for U.S. domestic and worldwide export markets. Headquartered in Portland, OR, CGI’s reliable supply chain spans the western region of the US, ensuring abundant ingredients for all of its partners, thanks to their trusted relationships with their farmers throughout the fertile croplands of Washington, Idaho, Montana and North Dakota, well known for its high-quality wheat, feed grains, canola and pulses. CGI is an owner of Montana Specialty Mills, who operates an organic and non-GMO oilseed crushing facility in Great Falls, Montana, a mustard seed facility in Conrad, Montana, and most recently Montana Craft Malt —providing specialty malt barley from Montana farmers to the craft brewing world. Today, they are vertically integrated, operating assets including grain elevators, processing plants and agronomy centers to support their farmers, which stretch the northern tier of the United States. With multiple touchpoints across the food supply chain, CGI provides trusted solutions and cultivates high-quality ingredients from their local farmers for a farm to table philosophy that nourishes the world, safely.

¹ [The Spokesman-Review: Idaho Sen. Carl Crabtree: Dam breaching would hurt Idaho’s farmers](#)