



**TO** Interested Parties

**FROM** Dave Metz and Miranda Everitt  
FM3 Research

**RE:** Washington Voter Views of Wild Salmon and Snake River Dams

**DATE** March 28, 2018

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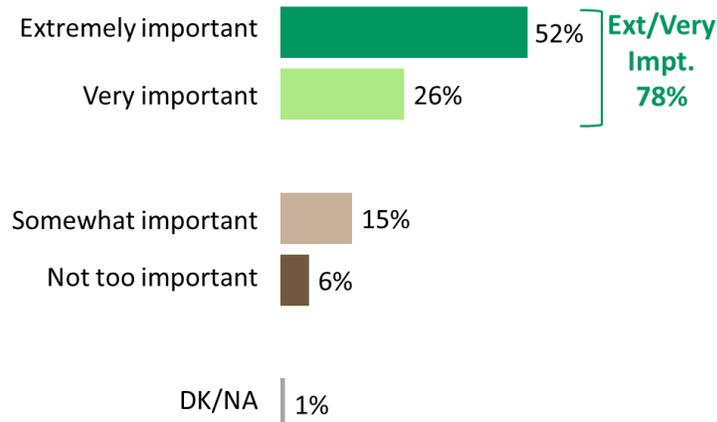
Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates (FM3) recently completed a survey of likely voters in Washington to assess their views of the state's salmon and the dams along the lower Snake River.<sup>1</sup> The study found that **Washington voters view preserving wild salmon as highly important; in fact, they prioritize it over preserving dams on the lower Snake River, and a majority supports a proposal to remove the dams.** As voters learn more about the issue, support increases further.

Other key findings of the study include:

- **Nearly four in five Washington voters say preventing the extinction of wild salmon in the state is "very important."** At the same time, fully half (52%) call this "extremely important," and only 6 percent say this is "not too important" to them.

**Figure 1: More than Three-Quarters Believe Preventing Salmon Extinction is Very Important**

*As you may know, we have had a significant decline of wild salmon in many areas of the state where there was a larger amount only a generation ago. Several species are now endangered. How important is it to you that we prevent the extinction of wild salmon in Washington State?*



- Given a direct choice between preserving wild salmon and preserving the dams on the lower Snake River, voters prefer salmon by a 38-point margin. In fact, nearly as many are undecided on the issue (19%) as put the dams first (22%).

**Figure 2: Voters Prefer Preserving Wild Salmon Over Dams**

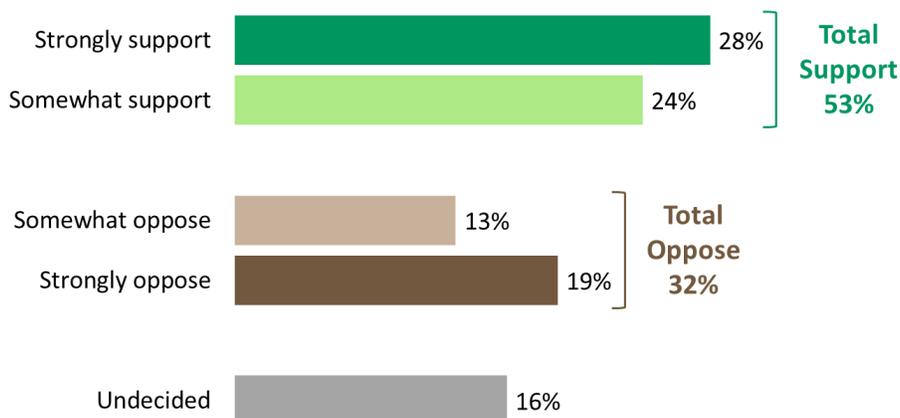
Overall, please tell me which of the following you think should be a higher priority.

Preference	% Chosen
Preserving wild salmon in the Snake River	60%
Preserving the lower Snake River dams	22%
Neither/Don't know	19%

- More than half (53%) of voters support removing the dams on the lower Snake River. As shown in Figure 3, voters favor removing the dams by a 21-point margin. Nearly three in ten (28%) "strongly support" dam removal, compared with 19% who "strongly oppose" it.

**Figure 3: A Majority Supports Removing Lower Snake River Dams**

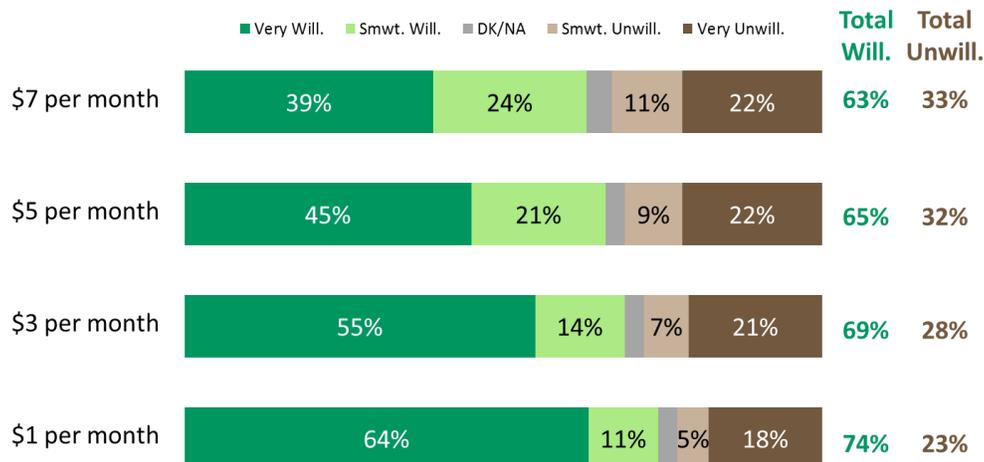
Over the past two decades, use of the Snake River dams for transportation has declined by 70%, and the dams only generate about 4% of the electricity used in Washington. At the same time, the dams have reduced wild salmon populations by acting as a barrier to adult salmon moving upriver to spawn, and young salmon moving back downstream. Having heard this, would you support or oppose removing these four dams on the lower Snake River in order to restore wild salmon?



- Underscoring their support for dam removal and wild salmon protection, voters say they are willing to pay more personally to accomplish those goals. As shown in Figure 4 on the next page, solid majorities of Washington voters are willing to pay up to \$7 monthly on their electric bills to restore wild salmon and improve water quality in the state. A majority (55%) is "very willing" to pay \$3 per month.

**Figure 4: Voters Are Willing to Pay More on Their Electric Bills to Restore Wild Salmon**

*Removing four dams on the lower Snake River would restore wild salmon and improve water quality, but might lead to a slight increase in electricity costs. Would you be willing to pay an additional \_\_\_ on your electric bill in order to ensure that wild salmon would be protected?*



- As voters learn more about dam removal and salmon, their support increases.** The survey also offered voters a variety of arguments for and against the dam-removal proposal. Supportive messages increased support for dam removal to more than three in five (61%), while reducing the share of undecided voters by half, from 16 percent to 8 percent. Criticisms of dam removal reduced support (within the margin of error) to just below three in five (58%), but still left a majority in favor.

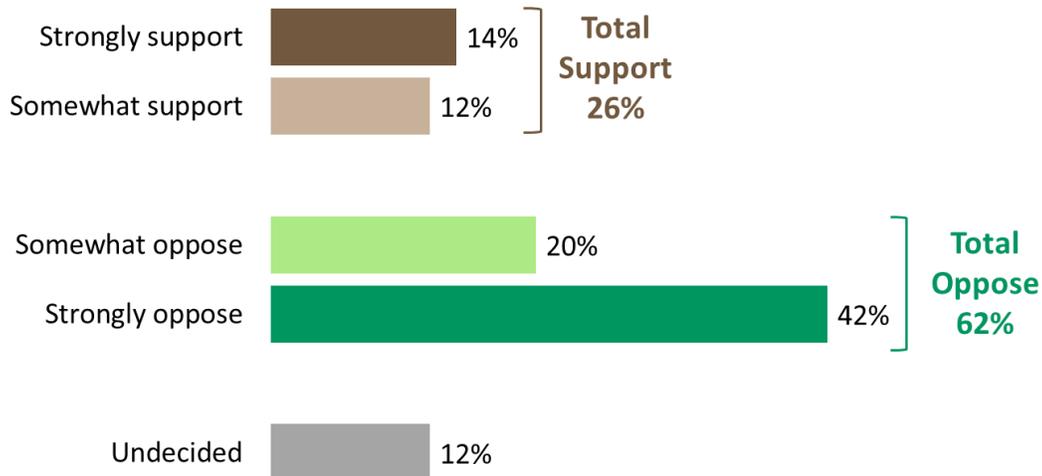
**Figure 5: Majorities Support Removal Throughout an Exchange of Messaging**

Opinion	Total Support	Total Oppose	Don't Know
Initial Opinion	53%	32%	16%
After Messages Supporting Removal	61%	31%	8%
After Messages Opposing Removal	58%	34%	8%

- More than three in five (62%) oppose specific legislation to keep the dams.** More than two in five (42%) "strongly oppose" proposed legislation from Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers to maintain the dams, while just one-quarter (26%) support it (**Figure 6** on the next page). In her home Congressional District (the 5th), patterns are similar -- 54 percent oppose the legislation (42% "strongly") and one-third (34%) support it.

**Figure 6: Voters Oppose McMorris Rodgers' Bill**

*Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers represents part of eastern Washington in Congress. Representative McMorris Rodgers has introduced legislation in Congress to keep the lower Snake River dams and prevent any new measures for aiding wild salmon. Does this legislation sound like something you support or oppose?*



In sum, the survey results indicate that Washington voters strongly support a proposal to remove the four lower Snake River dams. They strongly prefer restoring salmon over keeping dams, and are willing to pay as much as \$7 per month in additional costs on their electric bill to meet this goal. Majorities also oppose McMorris Rodgers' bill to preserve the dams -- including within her District.

<sup>i</sup> **Methodology:** From March 6-12, 2018, FM3 completed 400 telephone interviews (on both landlines and cell phones) with Washington voters who participated in the 2016 presidential election or have registered since then. The margin of sampling error for the study is +/-4.9% at the 95% confidence level; margins of error for population subgroups within the sample will be higher. Due to rounding, not all totals will sum to 100%.