

THE *Confluence*



Legacy at Risk

CONTEMPLATING A GRIM
FUTURE WITHOUT DAMS



*Trevor Stout (left) and
Father, Doug Stout, on
their Genesee, Idaho farm.*

Port of **LEWISTON**

SUMMER 2024

Legacy at Risk

DAM BREACHING THREATENS THE STOUT FAMILY'S FARMING FUTURE

A father sitting on a tractor, a towheaded toddler perched on his lap, both smiling and squinting happily into the sun. The snapshot on the farm shop wall captures a moment in time, one that for Doug Stout defines the life he chose; one of hard work, freedom, and most of all – family.

"I wanted to farm from day one," said Stout, a fourth-generation farmer in Genesee, Idaho who grows wheat, chickpeas and canola on the thriving family acreage. "There was just nothing else I wanted to do, nothing else that would give me the life I wanted."

His love of the land and the life it can provide is reflected in his son, now grown from smiling toddler to a 24-year-old man following in the family business – by choice.

"It's just ingrained in me," said Trevor. "I love the lifestyle, the freedom that it brings."

That lifestyle, those freedoms have never been more at risk with the recent signing of the United States Government Columbia Basin Commitments document by President Joe Biden. Many see the document – negotiated by the federal government, the states of Washington and Oregon, and four tribal nations without input from the agricultural community – as a roadmap for removing the Lower Snake River Dams. Proponents praise the move as one that will save local fish populations. Those that rely on the river system for commerce see the destruction of their livelihoods.

"Everyone is acting on emotion; common sense has to come back," said Doug. "Breaching the dams is irreversible, you can't come back from that."

Doug and Trevor see breaching the dams delivering a likely fatal blow to the strong, resilient farming communities that have flourished and grown in the Palouse. Both men are pragmatic – they've already started calculating how they will attempt to move on in a world without the dams – but they would mourn the loss of community that breaching would bring.

"The opportunities I've had, everything I've learned, the sense of community, those opportunities won't be there for younger people anymore," said Trevor. "It can all be taken away. You can't take that lightly."

To understand the commitment of the Stout family, one needs to look at their roots – both literally and figuratively. Agriculture has been the family industry dating back to the late 1800s. Doug himself was raised on the family farm in Genesee. His parents, Martin and Joan, taught him and his two brothers about farming, from growing wheat, hay and other crops to managing livestock including Charolais cattle (introduced to



The Stout Family (L-R): Makenzie, Doug, Tammy, and Trevor, with dog Ruger.

the area by Martin), chickens, and pigs. At the core, bringing all the diverse elements together to create a cohesive operation, was the family partnership.

"Times were tough, and my parents worked together to do what was necessary to make ends meet," said Doug. "Dad was out in the fields or with the cattle, mom butchered chickens and canned food from our garden."

Growing up in this atmosphere allowed Doug to develop a sense of what kind of agriculture he would pursue. For him, the decision to focus on growing crops without the livestock component was an easy one.

"I loved the dirt. My passion is growing," he said, noting that the ebb and flow of the seeding and harvest portion of farming allowed him to be an active part of his children's lives. "I was willing to work hard to make it happen, put in the sweat equity."

Determined to make his own way, Doug took a job on a neighboring farm right out of high school, finding true mentors in owners Kent and Mardell Broemeling. Working for them, he received a better education than a college could have provided, both in the fields and in the "back office."

"They took me under their wing," he said. "More than working the land, he taught me about the business. Building a retirement. Ethics. Community. He was another father figure for me."

Doug listened and learned, and with their guidance, was ready to strike out on his own. In 2000, the Broemelings sold him their farming equipment and leased him the land necessary to start his own business. This allowed Doug and his wife, Tammy, to build their own legacy, and in return, the Broemelings could watch their land continue to flourish with someone who shared their vision.

"It really was a new start for us, and they gave it to me," he said. "I owe my life to them. They gave me opportunities a lot of people don't get."

Doug and Tammy's family grew to include Trevor and younger daughter, Makenzie, and as a father, he grew even more grateful for his profession. The absence of rigid office hours allowed him to be where he was needed most: going to Little League games and practices, recitals, school conferences. His kids spent afternoons on the tractor with dad: Makenzie and her friends having picnics on truck beds, Trevor riding on tractors and combines on Dad's knee. Away from electronics, in the open air of the Palouse, memories were made.

23,000

Semi-trucks needed to replace the 171 barges that shipped grain in the Valley in 2023, vastly increasing shipping costs for farmers and customers.

2,000+

Regional farm families facing bankruptcy with breaching.

20-40¢

Per bushel increase in national grain shipping costs with loss of barging if dams are breached.

\$1.3 B

Estimated cost of needed infrastructure to address transportation, rail, and grain storage if dams are breached.

\$27 M

Total commodity value of goods (wheat, soy, corn, lumber) handled on the Columbia-Snake River System in 2022.

\$17 M

Annual reduced revenue from decreased land values for farms if dams are breached.



Port Maintenance Coordinator Chad Smith settles the nest in his pickup for transport.

The Eddy

The Future of Our Rivers



Scott Corbitt
Port of Lewiston
General Manager

The life of a port is akin to the flow of a river. We experience the excitement of the rapids as a project gets approved or the harvest comes in. The heart of the channel welcomes a log barge heading downriver, saving 108 log trucks from the roads, highways, and atmosphere. At harvest, a grain pile grows in the center of a lot like an island rising from the river.

An eddy is a circular vortex formed when the flow of the river – the current – gets pinched off and sent back against itself. Eddies are important to the life of the river; they can be both good and bad. They can bring nutrients to the surface or create a danger to navigation, if large enough. Knowing the cause of the eddy is truly key to understanding whether this phenomenon is a benefit or a danger. The eddy in our river system is the knowledge and information about our Port, our rivers, and our dams. In this space, I will try to provide some insights into the eddy that is swirling about the future of our community, our livelihood, our river.

I often hear people say they are “tired of talking about the dams” or dam removal “will never happen.” Swirling within the eddy of dam removal is the fact that we are closer to a Congressional vote on dam removal than at any time in history. Our dams are being threatened today like never before. We know what our rivers, in their present state, provide for us here in the Lewis-Clark Valley. Lifestyle, commerce, recreation, infrastructure, tourism, uniqueness. Those forces that are currently planning the removal of our dams are not focused on the facts within the eddy that explain the value of this place. Their justifications lie in untested speculation and a disregard of the negative impacts for those of us at Ground Zero should even one dam be removed.

In the coming months, the Port will be pulling the facts and data from this eddy that we can use to make your own decisions about our rivers. We will discuss the effects of breaching on our farmers, our local infrastructure, our lifestyle, and our economy.

Our Port, and our river, will survive when the true information is pulled from the eddy and sow the seeds of the future. I look forward to continuing to watch the harvest come in and head downriver into the center of the channel and out to the sea.

New Heights FOR OSPREYS

After a huge amount of teamwork, high-wire heroics, a trespassing goose and a lot of patience, a family of ospreys has a new home.

Ospreys gather sticks, bits of twine, and other discarded items to build nests they return to, year after year. One such nest had been perched atop the Port’s long-unused conveyor near the confluence of the Clearwater and Snake rivers for several years, a case study in durability.

With the Port’s planned cruise boat dock project expected to begin this fall, however, the rusted hunk of metal had to come down, and with it, the osprey nest. So how do you move a massive bird’s nest from nearly 70 feet above the Clearwater River?

The timing was determined by the season. In March, when the nest relocation took place, the osprey had not yet returned from their winter migration site. Avista Utilities selected the location, setting

up a new platform on a tall pole just west of the confluence property. Port Maintenance Coordinator Chad Smith, along with Rhodes Crane & Rigging of Spokane Valley, handled the logistics.

On a brisk March day, Smith and the crane team carefully relocated the large nest onto a hoist and lowered it onto the bed of a pickup truck. After transporting it to its new spot, the nest was lifted onto the new platform using the crane. A small hitch occurred when a Mother Goose from the area decided to make the nest her temporary home to lay and hatch her eggs. Once the goose family departed, the nest was available once more.

It took some time, but in June, ospreys were seen settling into their new home, where they will have a birds’ eye view of the new cruise boat dock. A truly happy ending!

The loss of barging will deliver the initial blow, as there is no feasible replacement. Gas prices and driver shortages make using semitrucks cost prohibitive, and expansion of rail is expensive and limited by the Pacific Northwest terrain. This is against a challenging financial backdrop of increasing storage costs, higher interest rates on equipment loans, and labor challenges. Combine all these factors, and already razor-thin profit margins are obliterated.

“Do you think we are going to beat our heads against the wall?” Trevor rhetorically asked. “We can only guess at how much worse it’s going to get if the dams are breached and we can’t barge. The smaller farms won’t have a chance.”

“There’s no going back (if dams are breached),” Doug said. “We’ve always prepared for the hard times, because farming has its ups and downs. But this? It’s irreversible.”

Trevor feels the same concern, but also sees a more basic risk at play – the loss of choice.

“My family, my parents, gave me a choice. I chose this life. I should be able to decide when and if I move on from it,” Trevor said. “No one else has the right to take it away.”

“Having your parents around, getting to know them as people? There’s nothing like it,” said Trevor. “I’m grateful for that time with my family. A lot of people aren’t that lucky.”

When Trevor was 10, Tammy was able to leave FedEx and run the “business office” of the farm. At the family’s office or even the kitchen table, she added to his knowledge of the economics side of agriculture.

“I knew I was going to get a complete education here, more than any college could give me,” said Trevor. “You can’t just focus on what’s in front of you, you must look to the future to be prepared for what may come. It’s not just the wheat and the harvest. It’s numbers, it’s economy.”

As a person who constantly works to expand his knowledge of finance and economics in the downtime between seeding and harvests, he sees the writing on the wall if dam breaching proceeds. It has been conservatively estimated that the loss of barging would increase national grain shipping costs by \$0.20-\$0.40 per bushel. While this would already be enough to bankrupt small family farms, Trevor scoffs at that number.

“It’s going to hurt right off the bat, but some costs are unforeseen,” he said. “We’ve always prepared for the bad times, but the impact of dam breaching? It’s infinite, you can’t put a number on it.”



(L-R): Chad Smith with Wife Michelle Smith; Preston Comstock, Port of Lewiston Finance & Property Manager; Scott Corbitt with Idaho Economic Development Association Staff.

Preston Comstock Takes on Dual Role

The Port is pleased to welcome Preston Comstock to the team as Finance & Property Manager. This dual-role position involves overseeing the Port's accounting operations and enhancing financial efficiency, as well as developing relationships with tenants and managing maintenance, repairs, and lease renewals. "This is an exciting challenge for me," Preston said. "I'm able to use my skills in a completely new environment."

A lifelong resident of the area, Preston brings a wealth of experience to the position. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Accounting from the University of Idaho and has worked in diverse settings, including public universities and medical corporations. Since starting in mid-May, Preston has hit the ground running, learning something new every day.

"I'm enjoying getting to know the Port, its processes, and its people," he said. "There are so many moving parts, and I'm learning how it all fits together so I can make a positive impact."

Preston and his wife, Kristine, live in Lewiston with their four children. When he's not immersed in numbers and processes, Preston helps to manage the family's flock of chickens, enjoys woodworking and is preparing to build their dream home.

Port Manager Named Economic Development Professional of the Year

The Idaho Economic Development Association named Port General Manager Scott Corbitt as the Idaho Economic Development Professional of the Year at their annual meeting earlier this year. He was nominated by Dodd Snodgrass, Executive Director of the Clearwater Economic Development Association. Congratulations!

Maintenance Coordinator Honored by Commission

Maintenance Coordinator Chad Smith was honored in May by the Port of Lewiston Commissioners for more than 20 years of outstanding service to the Port. Chad is an integral part of our team, ensuring the smooth operation and maintenance of our facilities. It's not every day we get to celebrate such a remarkable achievement for such a deserving individual. Thank you for your unwavering hard work and dedication, Chad!

Port of LEWISTON

IDAHO'S SEAPORT

OUR VISION

The Port of Lewiston is a respected leader contributing to the region's economic growth and vitality: a model of excellence for transportation, international trade, and job creation.

COMMISSIONERS



Pictured left to right: **Mike Thomason**, President; **Jerry Klemm**, Vice President; **Joseph Anderson**, Secretary/Treasurer

OUR TEAM

Scott Corbitt, General Manager
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TO VIEW OUR
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Your Port of Lewiston Team (L-R): Maintenance Coordinator Chad Smith, Communications Coordinator Mary Iacobelli, Finance & Property Manager Preston Comstock, Operations Manager Jen Blood, and General Manager Scott Corbitt.

PRESENTING

The Confluence

YOUR SOURCE FOR PORT
OF LEWISTON UPDATES

Change is an inevitable part of life. As we navigate the future of the Port amid substantial changes – both challenging and exciting – one thing must remain constant: clear, informative communication with you, our community.

We've taken significant steps toward that goal in the past year. These include boosting our social media presence (follow us on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn if you haven't already!) updating our logo and expanding our team.

Now we introduce The Confluence, our new Port newsletter.

Why The Confluence? For us, the name is ideal. In its simplest form, "confluence" refers to the merging of two rivers – fitting as we sit at the junction of the Clearwater and Snake rivers. But a second meaning, the coming together of people or elements, aligns perfectly with our commitment to community, service, and economic growth.

We want to bring you a full picture of our Port with each quarterly issue. From updates on projects like our new cruise boat dock to our advocacy efforts to save our Lower Snake River Dams, we will keep you informed and hopefully excited about the journey we are taking together.

In this sea of change, one thing you can count on is that we will consistently champion this Valley, fostering economic development and positive change with determination and purpose.