

THE *Confluence*

Infrastructure & Dam Removal

AN ABSENCE OF LOGIC

*Dustin Johnson, Lewiston's
Department of Public Works
Director, in front of the City's
Wastewater Treatment Plant.*

Port of LEWISTON

WINTER 2024



The City of Lewiston's new wastewater treatment plant is a feat of engineering - one that would have to be scrapped and redesigned with dam breaching.

An Absence of Logic

THE IMPRACTICALITY OF DAM BREACHING

Dustin Johnson is a man of facts and logic. Site maps, water systems, maintenance plans, the way infrastructure fits together like puzzle pieces – it's all a kind of music to his ears. And in the City of Lewiston, he's found his place and his people.

"The practicality of the Lewiston people is amazing," said Johnson, the City's Department of Public Works Director. "From cars to houses to lawnmowers, this community appreciates quality and getting their worth out of something. They also know when an investment makes sense."

Never was that more true than in 2019, when the budget-conscious Lewiston community looked at the facts and agreed, approving by a 9-to-1 margin a total of \$71 million for water and wastewater system upgrades during a bond election. The City's 1920s-era water treatment plant exemplified maximizing return on investment, but both the water treatment plant and the wastewater facility needed modernization.

"To serve the residents of this community the best way I can, I look at the basics. Are fundamental needs being met? Do our residents have water? Effective sewer facilities?" said Johnson, who has been with the City since 2020 and a Lewis-Clark Valley resident since 2015.

With both projects largely complete by the end of 2023, the answer is yes, hopefully for the next 20-40 years. The "hopefully" stems from ongoing efforts to dismantle the Lower Snake River Dams. If the dams are removed, these systems would need to be entirely redesigned and rebuilt, at astronomical and incalculable cost.

"This goes against the very nature of this town," said Johnson, who tries to stay out of politics and stay grounded in reality. "I'm respectful of facts, and the real ramifications of actions that will have life-altering impacts on this Valley."

The water levels are the primary issue. Both the water and wastewater systems rely on current water levels, which would drop an estimated 100 feet without the control dams provide. The domino effect makes putting a potential cost on the rebuild and redesign impossible.

"We are hemmed in by land in both locations. Where would we be able to expand? Complete relocation opens up even more issues," Johnson postulated. "You have water rights, new permitting, skyrocketing construction costs. Plus, staff training, monitoring costs, new piping. It's endless."

Water treatment is not the only issue – water sources are also at risk with dam removal. The aquifers that supply wells for 65,000 Lewis-Clark Valley residents on both sides of the state line rely on the Clearwater and Snake rivers to recharge. A combination of reduced water levels from dam breaching and rising demand could lead to disastrous consequences. The Lewiston Orchard Irrigation District, which supports much of the residential expansion in the City, is already encountering difficulties in drilling wells connected to Mann Lake and is considering the Clearwater River for future water supply.

"I'm a pragmatic engineer when I look at the dams," said Johnson. "Any infrastructure has maintenance and expenses with growth, and it's our job to plan for those.

But how do we plan for dam removal? I don't know."

Dam removal will also lead to challenges in managing stormwater, currently handled by the City's levee system and treatment ponds, necessitating redesign and investment. A 1992 US Army Corps of Engineers experiment that lowered water levels caused levees and bridges to buckle, resulting in lasting damage. This included erosion around the Southway Bridge, creating "scour holes" that compromised its structural integrity and lifespan.

"It's really death by a thousand cuts," Johnson added. "Without hydrostatic pressure, the system will collapse."

The engineer in Johnson – a self-described "nerd" when it comes to infrastructure – just doesn't understand why removal of the Lower Snake River Dams makes practical sense. He noted that the dams are impeccably maintained and have decades of life left to give to the communities that rely on them. "Why would you remove them when they're barely teenagers?"

At the end of the day, Johnson stressed the need for communication from everyone involved. His loyalty is firmly with the people he serves in the Valley he has made his home with wife Courtney and their two daughters.

"I'm passionate about infrastructure and serving my community," he said. "This isn't about politics. I need to be at the table to make sure everyone understands the ramifications."

In her Daughters' Eyes

INSPIRED BY LOVE OF FAMILY, G&E CONTINUES TO GROW



Jessi McLean with daughters Gracelyn and Eliana. G&E products are now international reaching 35 states and Japan

Jessi McLean and her company, G&E Spa Essentials, exemplify a genuine small business success story: born out of a deep love for family, it has blossomed into a thriving enterprise that she dreams of leaving as a legacy for her young daughters.

That dream grew closer to reality recently when she was awarded an Idaho State Trade Expansion Program Grant, which aims to boost the number of small businesses engaging in exports. The grant is just the latest success for Jessi, who has seen immense growth since her move into the Port's incubator space in 2023.

"We are so thankful to be a part of the Port of Lewiston Incubator Program! It has afforded us so many more opportunities and resources that we normally wouldn't even know about," said Jessi, who will use the funds to cover the expenses for her participation in a Las Vegas trade show in June.

G&E, named after Jessi's daughters Gracelyn and Eliana, started in the most modest entrepreneurial setting: her basement, crafting bath products for her children. Now offering a full range of all-natural products, her

business has experienced over 400% growth, added employees, and boasts a storefront at Village Centre Cinema in Lewiston. With the visibility from the upcoming trade show, the possibilities are endless.

"By applying for and receiving this grant, we are able to now offer our products on a larger platform and increase potential trade from Lewiston to the rest of the world," Jessi said. "I am so excited to not only share our wellness and beauty products with more people, but to share our story, and to give people another reason to celebrate Lewiston and all we have to offer."

The Eddy

Dig a Little Deeper



Scott Corbitt
Port of Lewiston
General Manager

Today's world has been described by the acronym VUCA: Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous. Every day we are bombarded with opinions disguised as fact and blanket statements presented as truth. In this VUCA world, the biggest voice, based purely on emotion and volume, can become accepted and believed.

We have all seen the billboards and the Facebook posts about the Lower Snake River Dams (LSRD): "Dams kill fish!"; "Fish and dams cannot co-exist!"; "Save the orcas and salmon – breach the dams!". These shouts from the rooftops are each very similar in that they do not contain facts to support their plea.

The remedy to these shouted opinions is actual fact.

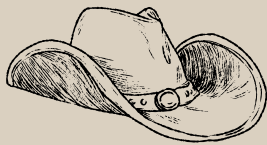
- Fact: returning numbers of Columbia River salmon (chinook, steelhead, sockeye, coho) have increased steadily since completion of Lower Granite Dam in 1975. (Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission graph).
- Fact: 2024 runs of sockeye exceeded records numbers and were more than double the 10-year average. (strikeandcatch.com, 9/17/2024, citing the Seattle Times, 9/13/2024).
- Fact: total adult salmon and steelhead returns between the completion of Bonneville dam in 1938 and 2022 INCREASED by 280%. (University of Washington Aquatic and Fishery Sciences graph, 2024).

If the shouts from the rooftops don't seem quite right, dig a little deeper.

Sometimes the shouts take the form of result-based studies designed to support a pre-formed agenda. Currently, the Port is involved with the WSDOT LSRD Transportation Impacts Study and the US Bureau of Reclamation LSRD Water Replacement Study. Both are designed to build a case to breach the dams, and both are being hurried to conclusion before the new administration takes office. The transportation study will say our farmers can simply move the 750,000 tons of harvest crops from barge to truck or rail, ignoring the fact that neither of those options are possible due to economic and workforce issues. The water use study will say we have plenty of water in the post-breach river but will not consider the cost of redesigning/rebuilding our industry and infrastructure to try to find that water supply. If the shouts from the rooftop don't make sense, dig a little deeper.

This VUCA world requires diligence and effort to find truth. The swirl of the eddy can confuse and mask the details. Opinions and shouts from the rooftops fill our daily lives with so much info babble that the loudest shout often drowns out the rest. On important issues, like the preservation of the dams that support our lifestyle and economy, dig a little deeper to find the facts. Our future depends on it.

YEE HAW!



Infuse & Booze Celebrates a 'Cowboy Christmas'



Port of Lewiston incubator success story Infuse & Booze continues to expand its reach across the country! Owners Jamie Laybourn and Amy McCall traveled to Las Vegas for the Cowboy Channel Cowboy Christmas, the only official gift show of the National Finals Rodeo. Meanwhile, staff have been working around the clock boxing up orders of their delicious cocktail infusion gifts for holiday shipping. Cheers!



Phase 1:
Bus Turnaround

Phase 1:
Parking

Phase 2:
Tourism Venue

Phase 2:
Amphitheater

Phase 1:
Cruise Boat Gangway

Cruising Countdown

As the 2025 cruise boat season approaches, the Confluence Riverfront project is steadily taking shape. Ground has been broken, and hints of what's to come are becoming clearer: the outline of a future bus turnaround, a parking lot, and the initial stages of a sidewalk and riverfront patio. If you let your imagination take flight, you can envision cruise boat passengers heading up the gangway for their thrilling Hells Canyon adventures on the majestic Clearwater and Snake rivers.

"We couldn't be more excited to see this collaborative effort come to fruition," said General Manager Scott Corbitt. "It's way past time for the Valley to have a venue that capitalizes on the stunning views of the Confluence, serving as a gateway for visitors to fully experience all that we have to offer."

The Confluence Riverfront project has three phases, including the first one, which is currently under construction by local contractor M.L. Albright & Sons and expected to be largely complete in March 2025. This phase includes much of the site development: paved access road, bus turnaround, parking, walkways, landscaping, and lighting. American Cruise Lines will build onto existing caissons to create a state-of-the-art gangway. The Port will retain ownership of the dock while American Cruise Lines will provide dock management services.

"Partnering with the Port of Lewiston will bring even greater economic benefits to the Lewis-Clark Valley," said Kristin Meira of American Cruise Lines. "American

Cruise Lines is thrilled to build upon its already robust presence in the community and looks forward to showcasing Lewiston as a tourism destination."

Work on Phase 2, which includes an open-air amphitheater for concerts and conversion of the current building into a community space and tourist venue, will start once Phase 1 is complete. The third phase of the project is tentative, with plans to obtain community input.

"This project will be something our community can be truly proud of," Corbitt said. "We can't wait to share it with our citizens."



M.L. Albright & Sons Project Supervisor Lance Boehler (left) and Alta Forest Products Equipment Operator Todd Boehler have an easy commute to meet for lunch. Their job locations at the Port - Todd at Alta's log yard and Lance at the Confluence Riverfront area - make it quite easy for them to connect.

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

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Passing the Torch



After nearly three decades of service, Inland 465 General Manager Wendy Rismon is retiring to tackle "new adventures." She will be greatly missed, but the Port's warehousing partner will be in the capable hands of Bobbi Jo Spring, who will take over when Wendy leaves at the end of February.

Connecting to the Information Superhighway

Behind the scenes work continues on the first open access fiber optic superhighway through Idaho. The Port's 95-mile, 288-count "Middle Mile" fiber project will help connect regions through the middle of Idaho in a way that does not currently exist. The Port's section of fiber will run from Moscow to Lewiston to Grangeville and connect into a joint IRON/IIG public/private project from Star to Grangeville and into an Idaho County project from Orofino to Grangeville (through the City of Nezperce).

"Fiber optic networks and the information and data they carry is essential for the economic viability of communities", said Port Operations Manager Jen Blood. "Reliable and fast connectivity benefits everyone in a community, from education and business to healthcare and public safety."

The Port's Middle Mile project is being funded with Port dollars, a federal EDA grant, and an Idaho Broadband grant to fill a void in the middle of the state. This fiber optic pathway will bring high-speed connectivity options a step closer to many rural residents in four counties. The Port will continue to work with local Internet Service Providers to enhance connectivity and internet speeds within the City of Lewiston and throughout the region.

"We are grateful to all of the county, highway district, tribal, state and federal employees who have done their part in reviewing and approving various aspects of the project," Blood said. "All of the behind the scenes work must be complete prior to seeing the shovels in the ground for this project."