



The Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River is one of four in southeastern Washington that have been at the center of debate for decades.

Image: Bonneville Power Administration

Removal of Snake River Dams: Inslee & Murray kick can down road again

Inslee, Murray say Snake River Dam Removal is possible but not yet.

In the 1960s and 70s, the Army Corps of Engineers built four dams on the Lower Snake River to allow barging and generate a small amount of electricity. As scientists, tribes, and fishermen all warned, these four dams decimated the Snake River's salmon and steelhead.

Four dams were built on the Lower Snake River — the Columbia River's largest tributary — the last completed in 1975. Across the basin, 31 dams, operated by the Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, generate a third of the region's power.

That power propelled industrial growth, but salmon, orcas and tribes are paying a hefty price. In the Columbia and Snake rivers, salmon and steelhead populations have declined by more than 90% since the dams were constructed. Research says the dams are partly to blame, but climate change, recreation and development are also factors.

Successfully breaching the four Lower Snake River dams will require extensive preparation and bipartisan support U.S. Democrats don't yet have, Washington Gov. Jay Inslee and U.S. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Washington, said on Sept. 8 in a cautious statement summarizing the findings of a joint report on dam removal and salmon recovery.

Their statement comes after many proponents of dam removal saw a possible resolution after the Biden Administration weighed in last month.

Native tribe, salmon advocates and environmentalists have strongly pushed for removal of the dams to allow the salmon to migrate again in the natural river which is expected to allow the runs to return to pre-dam numbers ten times larger than the small runs now. The salmon have been so restricted that they are now classified as endangered.

But the millions of people dependent on the river's electric power generation, as well as those dependent on tourist industry along the river, have just as strongly opposed removal of the dams.

"We are adamant that in any circumstance where the Lower Snake River Dams would be breached, the replacement and mitigation of their benefits must be pursued before decommissioning and breaching," the statement said.

Controversy shrouding the removal of the four dams in southeastern Washington has long fueled a political debate over salmon recovery, energy and climate change.

Inslee and Murray seem to suggest dam removal will be costly, and politically implausible on a federal level for the time being, but possible in the long-run.

"Furthermore, it should not be lost on anyone that breach would ultimately require Congressional authorization and strong bipartisan support — for that to become a credible option, the benefits of the dams must be sustained or mitigated," Murray said in the statement.

Info: shpr.fyi/snakedamremoval



Oldest Known Star- Earendel

One of the great challenges for astronomers is to understand when the first stars formed and what they were like. They already have some clues.

First, hydrogen and helium formed about 380,000 years after the Big Bang. The first stars were made of this. And second, the oldest galaxies formed about 400 million years after the Big Bang.

So the first stars must have formed at some point in between. The best estimate is that the earliest stars began to shine perhaps 100 million years or so after the Big Bang. But the truth is that nobody really knows because these stars have never been observed.

Now the James Webb Space Telescope has photographed a star that began shining just 900 million years after the Big Bang. The images improve on those taken earlier this year by the Hubble Space Telescope, which discovered this ancient object, and provide astronomers with their first glimpse of a star from this early period of the universe.

Astronomers call this ancient star Earendel, a word derived from Old English meaning "rising light". It began burning some 13 billion years ago but, because of the expansion of the universe, now sits about 28 billion light years from Earth, making it the most distant star ever observed.

Info: shpr.fyi/processedfoods



Processed foods proven unhealthy

Eating ultra-processed foods could be the cause behind many cases of anxiety and depression, a new study explains. Researchers from Florida Atlantic University's Schmidt College of Medicine say they have found a connection between consuming too much junk food and more adverse mental health symptoms.

Americans who consumed the highest amounts of ultra-processed foods reported having significantly more "bad days" and "anxious days" in comparison to people who generally avoid these foods.

Common examples of these products include sugary drinks like soda, fast food, potato chips, candy, pastries packed with sugar, and processed meats like burgers and sausages.

More than 70 percent of packaged foods in the U.S. are classified as ultra-processed food and represent about 60 percent of all calories consumed by Americans.

Info: shpr.fyi/foodprocessed

Read [this week's Bible Readings](#) for next Sunday, Sept. 18, Paul's instructions to Timothy: "...I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life..." 1 Tim 2:1-2 NIV

Dave Bunting, Sept. 11, 2022

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