

Here are public statements regarding the impact of potential draw downs of Lake Pend Oreille, made by members of the Lake Pend Oreille Alliance and other concerned members of the public at the June 24 meeting of the Lakes Commission (Pend Oreille Basin Commission):

“...I intend to use all available means to protect the sovereign rights of our state to make sure that Lake Pend Oreille is first and foremost managed in accordance with the needs and interests of Idahoans... I commit to remaining vigilant to any threats to summer and fall lake levels.” – Governor C.L. “Butch” Otter, represented by Katie Brodie, northern Idaho special assistant to the Governor

“Personally, I will continue to commit to standing up for our area, and continue to advocate for water quality and quantity, including support of litigation if necessary.” – Sen. Shawn Keough, Idaho State Senator, District 1

“It’s obvious that what is termed environmental function or eco-based function in the Columbia River Treaty negotiations could clearly be at serious odds with our way of life here on Lake Pend Oreille.” – Brent Baker, Lakes Commission

“I believe there are four main areas of concern here today. One, the Columbia River Treaty and its potential impacts to local water management. Two, the Memorandum of Agreement that was entered into between BPA and the Kalispell Tribe with no consultation with the Idaho Governor’s office or with this body, and has the threat of summer and fall draw downs. Three, Fish & Game is no longer making requests to keep winter levels up for Kokanee, and this leads us to believe that all stakeholders will be asking for full drawdown. Lastly, the flexible operation of the dam and its effect on erosion of the shoreline and condition of the lake in general. As a confluence of these issues, people feel concerned that the full enjoyment of Lake Pend Oreille by all those who use it is at risk.” – Ford Elsaesser, chairman, Lakes Commission

“The members of the Lake Pend Oreille Alliance are here to support the Lakes Commission in their mission to protect the lake’s quantity and quality. We are against any draw downs that affect the recreation, ecosystem, property values and scenic beauty of Lake Pend Oreille, and have the potential to damage the lake.” – Tom Trulock, board member, Lake Pend Oreille Alliance

“Changing spring, summer and fall flow levels at the Albeni Falls Dam specifically contradicts the purpose the dam was built for under Idaho state law.” – Ralph Sletager, owner, Dover Bay

“The modeling and drawdown should trigger a public process, record of decision and an opportunity to appeal. Why weren’t BPA’s own standards followed on the MOA?” – Ralph Sletager

“The MOA with the Kalispell Tribe was signed in 2011 after we had a 30-day comment period. We know now that we could have done more to reach out at that time... If this becomes a current Water Control Plan, it will need to have NEPA documentation and coordination.” - Bill Maslen, director, Integrated Fish & Wildlife Program for the Bonneville Power Administration

“We conducted a study through University of Idaho in which we caught 29,200 fish in the area of discussion and out of those, only 2 were bull trout. The question is, what kind of resource are we talking about that needs to be restored?” – David Bennett, retired fish scientist

“The taxes paid by people in this room are enormous. THESE are your stakeholders. We demand a seat at your table.” – Tom Seidmeyer

“There is a huge commercial impact issue. Where are the studies? They need to be done. What is the total economic impact of Idaho’s citizens having full use of the lake? It’s massive.” – Jay Bredl, homeowner, Lake Pend Oreille

“In terms of impact, 20 percent of Bonner County’s property taxes come from waterfront property owners. If these properties are significantly devalued by dropping the lake level, as we have seen in other areas where we have seen 50 percent loss of property values, this would have a huge adverse effect on the county and its services. The next rollback is that other property owners would be hit with more taxes. This is just one small area – it does not even count the cost of loss of recreational opportunities.” – Todd Sudick, retired pilot, longtime Lake Pend Oreille waterfront owner, member, Bonner County Waterways Advisory Board, candidate for Bonner County Commissioner, District 2.

“The BPA has been after the water on this lake as long as I’ve lived here. Back then, they came right out and said it was about power generation. Now, it involves the fish. But it’s always been about power.” – Todd Sudick

“The BPA is trying to buy increased power generation, plain and simple. It’s clearly about the dollars and most of us aren’t buying this.” – audience member

“The Kalispell Tribe has received \$40 million over 10 years in mitigation funding for a 400-member tribe. Where are the funds for our studies upstream and all the groups represented here?” - Linda Mitchell, Lakes Commission

“What about the University of Idaho study from 2009 showing no significant difference in temperature between the top and bottom of the dam? It looks like bad science making more bad science.” – Todd Sudick

“We know from our Dworshak Dam operation that drawdown does provide some help to fish.” - Bill Maslen, BPA

“What are you going to do to protect our ‘Quantity’ of water?”

- James McDonald, waterfront homeowner

“The Lakes Commission has no authority to litigate – we can petition the Governor’s office and the Northwest Power & Conservation Council. Previous litigation to stop draw downs came through the Lake Pend Oreille Idaho Club. If it came down to it, we would be simply the bully pulpit for asking for it.” – Ford Elsaesser

“Why wasn’t NEPA followed when the BPA entered into the MOA with the Kalispell Tribe? Does it supersede Idaho state law? It would appear there are some procedural irregularities that invalidate that MOA.” – Ralph Sletager

“The Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act are what satisfy those requirements.” – Bill Maslen, BPA

“Our basin is clearly owed mitigation funds. We definitely need an Economic Impact Statement. The Lakes Commission is set up to receive and direct mitigation monies for such purposes.” – Brent Baker, Lakes Commission

“When the Albeni Falls Dam was built under the Flood Control act of 1950, it was stated that the dam would revert back to State of Idaho to control and operate when the dam was paid for. That happened in 1962. When do we get it back?”
- Linda Mitchell, Lakes Commission

“I will take these items back to the BPA and IDFG. I can tell you having been involved before in mitigation discussions that the process can be protracted and complicated.” – Bill Maslen, BPA