

A Message from Reclaiming Earth Committee – March 6, 2019



In many parts of the globe, the subject of dams is a conversation that can get quite heated. Here in the Northwest, dams on the Snake River are in question especially for life of the salmon which the Orcas depend upon for food and the Colorado in California that runs dry before the water gets to the mouth of this river.

In Australia, dialogue and discussion about damming some of the rivers has been on the table for years. Three key river systems: the Mitchell River in Northern Queensland, Western Australia's Fitzroy River and the Greater Darwin area in the Northern Territory are targeted as needing the dams. (<https://abc.net.au/news/2018-08-30/giant-dams-report-northern-australia/10181682>.) These dams would support irrigated agriculture such as we see here in the United States and elsewhere.

In an article found in *Earth Song*, Autumn 2015, we read: "...farming the north would cause a host of environmental woes that we are already grappling with in southern Australia — wiping out hundreds or thousands of hectares (2.471 acres = 1 hectare) of native vegetation, draining and polluting rivers, bulldozing roads and irrigation canals through spectacular landscapes, industrializing pristine coasts with ports and dredging.

"They promise the world but rarely deliver long-term benefits to local communities and especially indigenous people. Pushed by big business and foreign investors, these projects take the best land and the water, use fly in-fly out workers, send much of the profits overseas and leave behind a trail of environmental destruction and broken communities." (*Let the Rivers Run*, Gaven McFadzean, p. 15)

We have seen this dynamic ourselves on our Columbia River and others. We do have some success stories such as the regeneration of the Elwha River located in the Olympic National Forest/Kitsap Peninsula when the dams were removed several years ago. This is a beautiful story that can be found at <https://nps.gov/olym/learn/nature/elwha-ecosystem-restoration.htm>. Restoration of this river not only benefited fish, wildlife, vegetation but, in addition, the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. One of their sacred sites was uncovered after the dams were removed and the water lowered.

Reflect on this and see where your prayer and reflections lead you. It could lead you to a space that becomes valuable to both you and gifts of creation.