From:	J. Kevin Hunt
To:	Grp. City Council and City Web Site
Subject:	Rattlesnake Dams
Date:	Friday, April 9, 2021 4:18:24 PM

Dear Mayor & Council:

I was 13 years old the first time I backpacked into the Rattlesnake Lakes on a five day adventure sans adults, with my chums Lar Autio, Mitch White and Steve Karkanen. Many more trips in both winter and summer followed, one aborted on the ridge to Stuart Peak when a severe blizzard and temps well below zero necessitated emergency bivouac in snow pits and return home in the morning. We undoubtedly saved one member of that party who was hypothermic.

[Before I go on, did you know that back before I ever ventured up there, legend has it that Sanders Lake turned pink every year from hatching of freshwater shrimp? Doesn't seem that could be possible, but ... that was the legend.]

While it is easy to make decisions based on the visible costs that are like the proverbial tip of an iceberg, when it comes to choosing between decommissioning vs. rehabilitating the dams, it would be foolish if, as with many decisions made by the city in recent years, the deciders failed to consider the massive economic and social costs below the water line that pose immense threats, the number one such threat being climate change.

Just today a major news story was the Water Emergency to be declared in California, which is in yet another consecutive year of drought. Decades ago, scientists predicted this and social scientists predicted domestic unrest, and even the ultimate U.S. annexation of Canadian land mass by threat of force, as the unrelenting progress of global warming wreaked havoc on hydrological cycles.

The LAST THING Missoula should do, is to deconstruct the earthen dams that although characterized as "ancient," and as having purportedly "not aged well," have in fact been remarkably resilient since their construction by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. Water storage is a resource with innumerable potential uses for mitigating effects of climate change, irrigating urban farmland, arresting thermal pollution, even generating energy.

The wildlife ecology of the Rattlesnake has adapted in the 90+ years since the amazing dam projects were completed by human blood, sweat and tears. There is no compelling ecological reason to take them out.

What is a mere $7 million to rehab ten dams, compared to what it would cost to undertake that original CCC project today? It is a tremendous bargain. Think of the hundreds of long-term, local jobs it could create. It is a perfect public works project for which the process of seeking federal funding should commence at once. It can also revive Job Corps. THIS IS TOO IMPORTANT TO BE LEFT TO WGM.

This is a unique situation in which not breaching dams is the green thing to do.

My great fear is that myopic recommendations will be made, with the ultimate decisions being made by Alderpersons who have never packed into Roosevelt, McKinley, Worden and

Sanders Lakes, never slept in the CCC cabin that finally disintegrated years ago, never camped on Worden Lake, skinny dipped in its cold, crystal clear alpine waters, never taken in the exhilarating view from the Eastern shore of Big Lake, never crossed a snow cornice from Stuart Peak ridge to the head of the trail descending down to Roosevelt & McKinley lakes.

If a "test" decommissioning is to be done, met it be of Carter Lake, which, when my chums and I were youngsters, was primarily accessed by motorcyclists via the treacherous road, and was a source of noise pollution, beer cans in the lake bottom, and drunken gunshots before Cass Chinske and Friends of the Rattlesnake built the activist support needed to see federal approval, land swaps and unique approaches that saved this fabulous area.

The necessity of manual tools for rehab of the dams is something of a red herring; the Sec'y of the Interior can issue waivers for certain essential gear. IF HUNDREDS OF MEN COULD BUILD CABINS AND CONSTRUCT THOSE DAMS WITH MANUAL TOOLS IN THE 30's, CERTAINLY MEN AND WOMEN CAN REHAB THE DAMS WITH MOSTLY MANUAL TOOLS TODAY.

If, when the decision falls to you (or your successors) and it just sounds too expensive, think of the THE DRIFT and what THAT cost...and it's ABORTED without one brick having been put down!

Or (tongue now planted in cheek), you might consider somehow annexing the lakes or water rights into the downtown Urban Renewal Zone, declaring the dams "blighted," and taking some of that increment from the Stockman's Bank and applying to dam rehab. Oh, wait...THE STOCKMAN'S BANK SITE HASN'T HAD AN IOTA OF CONSTRUCTION, EITHER.

How much interest has Missoula paid to date on the money it borrowed from Stockman's Bank in order to give an unnecessary subsidy to Stockman's Bank on an unnecessary second big Stockman's Bank building that has yet to commence construction?

I guess that's a fish to fry at another time.

Yours very truly,

/s/ J. Kevin Hunt
Ward 1

Messages and attachments sent to or from this e-mail account pertaining to City business may be considered public or private records depending on the message content. The City is often required by law to provide public records to individuals requesting them. The City is also required by law to protect private, confidential information. This message is intended for the use of the individual or entity named above. If you are not the intended recipient of this transmission, please notify the sender immediately, do not forward the message to anyone, and delete all copies. Thank you