

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### PACIFIC NORTHWEST CLIMATE CHANGES AFTER CONTINENTAL GLACIATION

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A gradual period of glacial recession that led to a long series of upper Columbia floods accompanied a change from a colder and wetter climate to a warmer era that emerged over a period of thousands of years. Then, about 13,000 years ago, that warming trend increased rather abruptly. This relatively fast change nearly halted a long pattern in which a shifting ice sheet some 2,000 feet high advanced and retreated in such a way as to block river valleys long enough to form enormous glacial lakes retained by ice dams. Then during a warmer phase, those ice dams would give way, releasing enormous floods. During colder phases, ice dams would return to create a massive new lake. But with a minor exception when Snake River briefly flowed backward in its lower course in part of eastern Washington, that pattern no longer recurred. As a result of that substantial change, a long series of some three dozen fabulous Columbia floods came to an end. By about 8,000 years ago, a noticeably hotter environment affected life in Idaho and other northwestern areas in many ways.

**(This information has not been edited.)**

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