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Hastings' Statement on Corps of Engineers Release of Outline on How to Study Snake River Dam Removal

WASHINGTON D.C. – Following is a statement from **Congressman Doc Hastings (WA-04)** on the Snake River dam removal “study plan” prepared and released today by Army Corps of Engineers at the direction of the Obama Administration. Hastings is an outspoken defender of the Northwest’s hydropower dams as clean, renewable sources of low-cost energy. Hastings serves as the top Republican on the House Natural Resources Committee, which has jurisdiction over both endangered fish recovery and federal hydropower dams. The district that Hastings represents in Congress includes the longest stretch of the Columbia River of any Representative, as well as one of the four threatened dams.

“Dam removal should never have been put back on the table by the Obama Administration. It is an extreme action that would increase power prices, kill jobs across the Northwest, increase carbon emissions, and isn’t proven to actually recover fish.

The Obama Administration asserts that they consider dam removal to be a “contingency of last resort.” However, they directed the Corps of Engineers to immediately prepare this plan outlining how it would conduct dam removal studies. It gives some concern when a “contingency of last resort” turns into ‘get a plan written no later than March 31st.’ The rush to write and finalize a plan to study dam removal when the BiOp hasn’t even been approved by the federal court is also troubling.

If the Obama Administration wants to prove that they truly consider dam removal a “last resort” then they must file away this Corps dam removal study plan in a locked drawer and be prepared to resist those who will push for the work to begin now. The Obama Administration’s amendment to the BiOp states that the dam removal study work outlined in the Corps plan won’t begin until a far-off, future trigger occurs – and the Administration must defend this plan and fight efforts by any who wish to fast-forward dam removal activities to today, whether they be dam removal extremist groups or a federal judge.

The sooner dam removal is again off the table, the sooner we can get back to the real solutions that have been proven to benefit fish survival and recovery. The fact of the matter is the Corps of Engineers already spent seven years studying dam removal and concluded that it would provide little or no benefit to any of the listed species on the Columbia and Snake Rivers, while inflicting a high economic cost. We must also keep in mind the high returns of salmon that the Columbia River system is experiencing, with many runs exceeding levels from days before all of the system’s dams were built.

I do want to commend the Corps for repeatedly pointing out in this document that neither they, nor the Administration, have the authority to actually remove these dams. The Corps document correctly states that the authority over dam removal rests with Congress, and in the House of Representatives it rests with the Committee on which I serve as the top Republican. I am completely committed to protecting these dams and the jobs, clean low-cost power, irrigation water, recreation, flood control and transportation benefits they provide to the Pacific Northwest. We simply cannot afford to allow extremists play politics with this important energy infrastructure, especially in these tough economic times."

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