



Committee on Natural Resources U.S. House of Representatives

Chairman Doc Hastings

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Hastings Demands Army Corps Explain Its Settlement to Expand EPA's Regulatory Authority over Columbia & Snake River Dams

Obama Administration Approves \$140,000 in taxpayer-funded attorneys fees

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) sent a letter to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers voicing strong concerns over the Corps' settlement this week with Columbia Riverkeeper, a group that for years has sued the federal government and favors removal of Northwest dams. The settlement, which involves payment of over \$140,000 in taxpayer-funded attorneys' fees to the plaintiff, would vastly expand the regulatory authority of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over Army Corps' dam operations nationwide. These dams, especially those in the Pacific Northwest, are the major source of clean, renewable electricity, irrigation, flood control, and navigation.

"Incredibly, I understand that no one other than U.S. Department of Justice or Army Corps lawyers were made aware of the terms of this sweeping settlement before it was finalized, and signed by a judge. Like an increasing number of the Obama Administration's 'sue and settle' agreements over the past few years, this settlement was negotiated behind closed-doors by the Justice Department with a litigious group without consultation or input from those most directly impacted," wrote Chairman Hastings in the letter. "Of great concern is the likely precedent that this decision could have relating to the EPA's enforcement of the Clean Water Act, relating to the operation and maintenance of federal and non-federal dams, irrigation and maintenance of a vital navigational link on the Columbia and Snake Rivers in Washington, Idaho and Oregon. This comes amidst the EPA's hugely controversial 'Waters of the U.S.' proposal, which could shut down a host of water development projects and make it easier for litigious groups to sue to block them. I would request an immediate and thorough explanation of the Army Corps' rationale and details of its actions relative to this settlement, not just to Congress, but also to all affected state, local tribal and other stakeholders that have an interest in the Army Corps' dam operations nationwide."

To view the letter, click [here](#).

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