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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

April 8, 2010

Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Mr. Steve Wright, Administrator
Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, OR 97208-3621

Brigadier General John R. McMahon
Commander and Division Engineer
US Army Corps of Engineers
Northwestern Division
1125 NW Couch St.
Suite 500
Portland, OR 97209

Re: 2010 barge and spill operations

Dear Administrator Lubchenco, Administrator Wright and General McMahon:

As you know, 2010 water conditions are shaping up to be the lowest since 2001. This unfortunate development adversely impacts a number of Northwest resources, including juvenile salmon that migrate downstream to the Pacific Ocean. The latest water supply forecast indicates inflows at Lower Granite Dam are 56% of average.

To preserve and maintain precious water and power generation resources this year, I write to urge NOAA Fisheries, the Bonneville Power Administration and the Corps of Engineers to work together to utilize all available actions recommended by the 2008 Federal Columbia River biological opinion to adjust operations to aid the transportation of Endangered Species Act-listed juvenile salmon and steelhead, including maximized barging and reduced Spring spill.

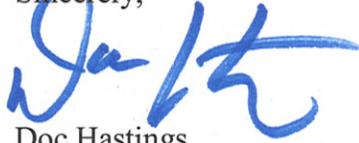
Administrator Lubchenco, Administrator Wright and General McMahon
April 8, 2010
Page 2

In low water years like this one, maximizing barging and reducing spill is supported by the best available science. A study released in January by NOAA Fisheries' Northwest Fisheries Science Center examined fish transportation data from 1998 to 2008 and concluded that juvenile fish transported in barges resulted in significantly higher rates of returning adult salmon in most cases compared to fish kept in-river. This is especially the case in a low water year, where barging would increase protection of young salmon from predators, low flows and warmer water conditions.

While I have long been critical of policies that would force spill at dams during summer months when few salmon would benefit and lost power revenues would cost several tens of millions of dollars, I also question spilling water in the spring during low water years at dams when the science shows it will harm fish and potentially will adversely impact the Northwest's hydropower capacity.

Earlier this year, the Bonneville Power Administration advised that its revenues could be \$500 million lower than expected for 2009 and 2010, due to these low water and poor economic conditions. With this stark reality, I request you do all that you can to balance dam operation to improve salmon survival and preserve critical water and power resources.

Sincerely,



Doc Hastings
Ranking Republican Member