

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

CHAIRMAN DOC HASTINGS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: [Jill Strait](#) or [Spencer Pederson](#)

202-226-9019

Hastings Disappointed in Decision to not Appeal Court's Sea Lion Ruling, Will Explore Options to Protect Endangered Salmon and Taxpayer Dollars

WASHINGTON D.C. – House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WA-04) released the following statement after the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) announced that it will not appeal a ruling by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals that would block states and tribal entities from lethally removing California sea lions that feast on endangered salmon.

"I am disappointed in the federal agency's announcement that they will not appeal the ruling by the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. After trying all other methods, lethal removal is sometimes the only option left to stop problem sea lions. Northwest residents spend hundreds of millions of dollars every year to protect salmon and taking this important tool away from our communities means they will have to sit by while a few sea lions gorge themselves on thousands of endangered fish. This is unacceptable and I will be exploring options to address this problem."

Last spring, California sea lions consumed more than 5,000 adult endangered salmon. As salmon populations are recovering and record runs of salmon are returning to the Columbia River to spawn, the sea lion populations have substantially increased and are growing as a threat to endangered salmon runs.

In past Congresses, Chairman Hastings introduced legislation that would create a temporary expedited process for the states of Washington and Oregon and the four Columbia River treaty tribes to obtain permits for the lethal removal of a limited number of California sea lions preying on salmon and steelhead in the Columbia River.

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