

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPUBLICANS

CONGRESSMAN DOC HASTINGS, RANKING MEMBER

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Hastings Questions Stelle Appointment to NW NOAA Fisheries Post

*Letter to Sec. Locke raises Stelle's prior service in controversial 1990's,
potential Conflicts of Interest, President's Lobbyist Hiring Ban*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Obama Administration's announced return of Mr. Will Stelle to the regional fisheries post he held in the Clinton-Gore Administration prompted Rep. Doc Hastings (WA-04) to send a [letter](#) to Department of Commerce Secretary Gary Locke that expressed strong concerns about the selection and requested detailed disclosures on the nominee's client history and potential conflicts of interest.

Hastings serves as the Ranking Republican of the House Natural Resources Committee that has jurisdiction over the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), where Stelle is being named the Northwest Regional Administrator. This position oversees federal ocean fishing and endangered species recovery for ocean fish and marine mammals in the Pacific Northwest region of the country.

Stelle led this agency when it wrote the failed 2000 Columbia River BiOp. Since departing the post about ten years ago, Stelle has worked as a lawyer and registered lobbyist whose clients include those with a direct interest in issues that he would have authority over as the Regional Administrator.

"With this selection, the Administration has apparently decided to take a step backward into the controversies of the past, rather than selecting a new person who could lead this agency into a fresh start," wrote Hastings. "A great many in the Northwest hope that a legally-sound BiOp will soon be in place and that management decisions will soon be free of the courtroom, and that is why having a new leader for the agency is especially appealing at this time... The question must also be raised of whether this appointment would run afoul of President Obama's oft-stated goal of ensuring political appointees would not work on regulations or contracts directly and substantially related to their prior employer."

To ensure transparency, Hastings is requesting the disclosure of Stelle's current and past clients, the positions he has held with organizations since 2000 and a list of known issues for which recusal from decision-making will or may be necessary to avoid potential conflicts of interests.

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