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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

July 1, 2010

William W. Stelle Jr., Regional Administrator
Northwest Region
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
7600 Sand Point Way NE
Seattle, WA 98115-0070

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 Summer Fish Operations Plan

Dear Administrator Stelle, Administrator Wright and General McMahon:

As you may know, every year for the past several years, I have expressed strong opposition to the current federal policy to wastefully spill water through eight Columbia and Snake River hydropower dams during summer months. At a time when very few Endangered Species Act-listed fish remain in the river, the lost power generation revenue results in a cost of tens of millions of dollars annually.

I write to reiterate my concerns about the recently-filed 2010 Summer Fish Operations Plan, and to urge your immediate reconsideration of this policy. Continued spill is particularly troubling in a year when water runoff is the second lowest in a decade, regional unemployment rates are over 9% and the Bonneville Power Administration's power revenues are forecast to be \$200 million below expenses, according to their last quarterly forecast, signaling the possibility of a rate increase.

My concerns about summer spill have been shared by those in your positions in the past. In a statement issued to Northwest stakeholders on August 26, 2003, the then-regional heads of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) noted that summer spill "appears to be excessively costly relative to the biological benefit provided," costing BPA \$1 million per day

that year in August. Moreover, the statement cited an analysis performed by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council that concluded summer spill during the month of August would likely result in only five additional Snake River fall chinook.

In December 2005, Judge James Redden ordered increased summer spill beginning in July and August 2006 through the dams, despite continued concerns it was based on questionable science and that it not only wouldn't aid the recovery of endangered salmon, but actually would kill more fish in the river. Since then, summer spill has cost the region hundreds of millions of dollars, has aided only a few dozen fish, and has potentially destroyed many more. This is verified by the June 2007 "after action" report filed by the NOAA Fisheries, BPA, and the Corps that concluded the following about court-ordered spill:

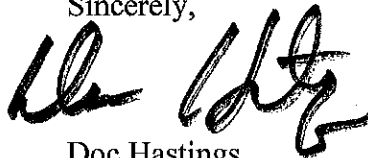
- "The cost associated with the lost energy production of the court-ordered increased spill was over \$63 million in 2006 alone." (Emphasis added)
- "The vast majority of ESA-listed fall chinook salmon migrated through the lower Snake and Columbia River dams in June and July—over a month before the spill ended, with over 99% of the ESA-listed salmon having migrated through the dams two weeks before the court-ordered spill ended."

It is puzzling that the federal agencies' 2010 Summer Operations Plan recently filed with the court proposes to "rollover" the same spill regimes that would spill more, and longer, than is required under adaptive management provisions of the federal agencies' 2008 Federal Columbia River Biological Opinion (BiOp). The 2008 BiOp, formulated with the approval of the states of Washington, Idaho, Montana and several Northwest Tribes, provides that when the number of young fall chinook in the river falls below 300 fish per day for three consecutive days, summer spill would be stopped.

Northwest ratepayers are already paying \$600 to \$700 million annually for fish costs associated with the operation of the Columbia and Snake River dams. Allowing additional millions of Northwest families, farmers and businesses' ratepayer and taxpayer dollars to be gambled on questionable fish policies is simply inexcusable.

As I have before, I will continue to advocate a common sense, balanced approach to salmon recovery, grounded in science, that will ensure both abundant salmon runs and the benefits of our hydropower system are maintained for generations to come. However, I urge you to follow your own biological opinion to reduce lost power costs and protect salmon as the science and data, and your own AMIP, supports.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doc Hastings", written in a cursive style.

Doc Hastings
Ranking Republican Member