



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

March 11, 2010

The Honorable Ken Salazar
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Request for Extension of Comment Period of USFWS Proposed Revision of Bull Trout Critical Habitat Designation

Dear Secretary Salazar:

Considering the impact this proposed action would have on private property, jobs and economic activity across a vast region of our country, I write to request the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) extend by 60 days the comment period on its draft economic analysis and voluntary proposal to revise its 2005 designation of critical habitat for bull trout, which is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. In addition, I would request that the FWS schedule additional public hearings on this proposal during this time.

On January 13, 2010, the FWS announced it had "voluntarily embarked" to re-examine the science and revise the 32 critical habitat units that it has deemed essential to the conservation of bull trout. As written, the FWS proposal would vastly expand the stream miles and lake acreage and reservoirs currently designated as critical habitat in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Nevada.

The FWS' own draft economic analysis calculates the potential cost of this proposal would measure in the millions of dollars over the next 20 years on a host of activities, including requiring fish passage modifications at federal and non-federal dams, removal of culverts and altering forest management. Almost 36 percent of the proposed additional areas would occur on privately-owned land across these five states.

For a proposal of this magnitude, the current comment period of just 60 days is simply inadequate. In addition, I am dismayed that while the FWS held a number of information meetings, that these all occurred within just a three week period, and that only a single public hearing was held on February 25th in Boise, Idaho, during which public testimony was received.

The Honorable Ken Salazar

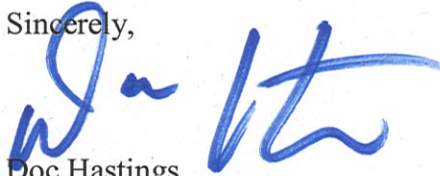
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Given the significant proposed changes to the critical habitat designated just a few years ago, and given the potential of such broad economic impact to my state and others, I respectfully request FWS to provide a 60-day extension so that interested parties have adequate time to respond with their written comments. In addition, I would request that additional hearings be scheduled to allow a reasonable opportunity for citizens from each of these affected states to participate in person.

I would appreciate a prompt response to this request. If there are any questions, please have your staff contact Todd Ungerecht of the Committee staff at (202) 225-2761.

Sincerely,



Doc Hastings
Ranking Republican Member
Committee on Natural Resources

cc: Dr. Rowan Gould, Acting Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service