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**STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE DOC HASTINGS**  
**CHAIRMAN**

**HOUSE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
**AT THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES,**  
**WILDLIFE, OCEANS AND INSULAR AFFAIRS**  
**OVERSIGHT HEARING ON**

**THE FY2012 BUDGET REQUEST OF THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND**  
**ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION (NOAA)**  
**MARCH 31, 2011**

This hearing is very important for my constituents in central Washington—as well as for Americans nationwide. As NOAA comes to testify in support of a sizable budget increase over current funding levels, many of the millions of people that live on the land and coastal areas NOAA regulates, are struggling economically.

For the past 20 years, NOAA has expanded its management responsibilities over Endangered Species Act-listed salmon to include 28 separate populations, resulting in severe economic impacts to vast portions of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and California.

These listings have resulted in policies that require federal approval of literally every human activity involving water and salmon. Over the past decade, increased lawsuits against agriculture, irrigation, forestry, transportation, operators of clean hydropower-producing dams, and other development, have taken a huge bite out of our nation's economy. These lawsuits have even blocked efforts to stop sea lions from eating more and more endangered salmon.

Despite several recent years of record and near-record salmon returns, not one population of salmon has been removed from the ESA list. NOAA has finalized only a handful of salmon recovery plans. NOAA has even suggested in a recent decision that more ESA-listed salmon species will be needed to feed another listed species under its jurisdiction--the orca whale.

President Obama, in his State of the Union address, referred to the duplicative federal endangered salmon management in the ocean and in rivers as an example of how the government needs to be more efficient and competent. I agree the federal government can and must be more efficient in these areas. Unfortunately, this latest NOAA budget request falls far short.

This budget request represents an increase of more than \$700 million over current funding levels—a 15.8% increase--largely for expensive new satellite programs and to create a whole new bureaucracy—the NOAA Climate Service, including plans for a “customer engagement and education division.”

In exchange for that huge increase, NOAA seeks to ramp up law enforcement against fishermen in the midst of recent media reports that NOAA officials shredded documents, imposed unjustified fines and shut down fisheries.

NOAA also seeks a \$37 million increase for a “national catch share program”—in the process, moving money out of a more productive cooperative research program. While I understand the need to fund existing catch share programs, I am concerned that the Administration seems intent on imposing catch shares in fisheries where they are not wanted.

I am concerned with the adequacy of NOAA’s data collection activities. This budget request significantly cuts ship time for fishery research vessels and heightens concerns about whether NOAA will have reliable science to guide its fishery regulations.

This data concern is particularly apparent in the science used by the agency to regulate activities - like ocean-based fishing - that might affect listed species.

Even though NOAA has spent more than \$150 million since 2001 for Steller sea lion research, significant questions remain unanswered. This is especially true in the western Aleutian Islands where NOAA-imposed restrictions could result in up to \$61 million in losses per year based on the actions of only three tagged animals. Such decisions made without adequate scientific information are unacceptable.

NOAA also seeks new funds to implement the controversial Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning initiative and National Ocean Council activities, which is constructed to lead to sweeping new regulations on coastal and inland waterways across the nation. I am troubled that these executive branch actions are moving forward without Congressional or statutory approval.

In the coming months, I look forward to a robust oversight of NOAA’s programs and activities to ensure that species, coastal areas-- and American jobs --are protected for generations to come, and that NOAA’s decisions are based on sound science and only move forward under proper statutory authority.