



Hastings speaks on saving dams

Posted: Thursday, Nov 16, 2006

By Bill Stevenson

Herald editor

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Congressman Doc Hastings, R-4th Dist., spoke out against another call to remove four Snake River dams Wednesday.

"These groups will go to any extreme to push their dam removal agenda. They'll manufacture a study or ignore scientific facts, whatever it takes to tear out our dams," Hastings said.

A coalition of environmental groups held a press conference Wednesday in Washington, D.C., claiming removal of the dams would save tax payers \$5 billion a year in operating costs. The organizations, including Save Our Wild Salmon, Taxpayers for Common Sense, Republicans for Environmental Protection and others, constructed a study termed Revenue Stream.

The study claims the Snake River region surrounding the Lower Granite, Little Goose, Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor dams could generate \$20 billion in revenue from increases in outdoor recreation and improved commercial fishing conditions.

The Bonneville Power Administration reports the removal of the dams would cost \$373 million annually for 100 years to implement, restore transportation, replace water supplies, and create new sources of power. The benefits would be roughly \$106 million in avoided operational costs, additional fishing, according to the BPA. The federal agency projects the cost of removing the dams at \$26.7 billion.

"The high-use projections, which present a net increase in the value of recreation of about \$300 million annually, are not considered realistic," notes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in an Environmental Impact Statement and Lower Snake River Juvenile Salmon Migration Feasibility Report.

"For six years I've stopped any action in the U.S. House on Representative (Jim) McDermott's dam removal legislation. One can expect these groups will be pushing hard for action next year. With Speaker-to-be Nancy Pelosi on record in support of breaching Northwest dams, those who share my commitment to protecting our dams need to be on high alert," said Hastings.

The coalition of environmentalists also claim hydroelectric ratepayers are continually paying more for failed attempts to increase salmon returns to the Snake River.

The state Department of Fish and Wildlife reported record setting spring Chinook salmon runs in 2003, Columbia River steelhead returns reached a 22 year high in 2002 and the highest number of Chinook salmon passing the Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River took place in 2001, a record since counting began in 1975.

"These special interest groups can try to ignore and dismiss the scientific data showing salmon are returning in record numbers, but the majority of those living in the Pacific Northwest know we can have both healthy salmon runs and the clean, renewable hydropower that our dams provide." Hastings said.