

ENDANGERED SPECIES: House bill proposes to sacrifice sea lions for salmon

Allison Winter, *E&E Daily* reporter (07/30/2007)

Legislation that would make it easier for states in the Northwest to interfere with or kill protected sea lions in an effort to keep them from wiping out endangered salmon is on the move in the House.

Del. Madeline Bordallo's (D-Guam) Fisheries and Wildlife Subcommittee holds a hearing on, [H.R. 1769](#), the "Endangered Salmon Predation Prevention Act," this week.

The bill from Rep. Brian Baird (D-Wash.) would lift some Marine Mammal Act protections for sea lions, allowing officials in California, Oregon and Washington to kill up to 10 sea lions or use "alternative measures" to keep them away from salmon.

The California sea lion population has increased six-fold over the past 30 years, and in recent years more than 1,000 sea lions have started to enter the lower part of the Columbia River during the peak spring salmon run.

At the Bonneville Dam, along the Columbia River in Oregon and Washington, sea lions consumed almost 3 percent of the salmon passing the structure last year, according to the Army Corps of Engineers. It was seven times as many salmon as they ate five years ago.

Officials at the dam have tried "hazing" the sea lions away from the salmon, but some have not been responsive.

Environmentalists say the real problem is not the sea lions, but the dams, since they create an artificial situation that groups the salmon. They want to eliminate four dams in the lower Snake River to help restore salmon runs. American Rivers and the Humane Society have come out against the bill.

The legislation would create an expedited permit process for parties interested in killing the sea lions. They could "lethally remove" no more than 10 animals a year. The bill includes a "sense of Congress" statement that non-lethal methods of controlling the predation are preferable to lethal methods.

Schedule: The hearing is set for 10 a.m. on Thursday, Aug. 1, in 1334 Longworth.