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Hastings: Summer Spill Results in Higher Energy Prices, Not Saved Fish

WASHINGTON D.C. - House Natural Resources Committee Ranking Member Doc Hastings (WA-04) today sent a [letter](#) to NOAA's Northwest Regional Administrator Will Stelle, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Administrator Steve Wright, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineer Brigadier General Jon McMahon expressing on-going concerns with the 2010 Summer Fish Operations plan. [Click here to read the full text of the letter.](#)

July 1st marks the beginning of the summer months when water is spilled through the eight Columbia and Snake River hydropower dams in an attempt to assist endangered salmon. These summer spills cost tens of millions of dollars in lost hydropower generation - increasing electricity costs for families, businesses and communities. In addition, studies have shown that these spills are based on questionable science and aid only a few dozen fish.

"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," wrote Hastings. "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."

A June 2007 report filed by the NOAA Fisheries, BPA, and the Corps about the 2005 court-ordered spill confirmed that while the spills cost millions of dollars, the benefits to the salmon were questionable. The report found:

- "The cost associated with the lost energy production of the court-ordered increased spill was over \$63 million in 2006 alone."
- "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."