

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

SS3-312
JUN 16 2004

June 9, 2004

Mr. Steve Wright
Administrator
Bonneville Power Administration
PO Box 3621
Portland, OR 97208-3621

Dear Steve:

I am writing to you to express my concerns with BPA's revised 2004 summer spill proposal. While I applaud your agency's commitment to reducing power rates in the Northwest and improving our competitive advantage, I do not believe that these should be achieved by jeopardizing plans to meet our legal obligations to salmon. I am concerned that the revised spill proposal does just that.

As you know, the 2000 Biological Opinion on the Federal Columbia River Power System is currently being rewritten by NOAA Fisheries after being ruled inadequate by Judge Redden last year. While the plan itself was flawed, one of the few successes of the BiOp has been the summer spill program. Spill is widely regarded as the safest and most effective means of getting fish past the dams. I do not think that now is the time, with an inadequate salmon plan in the process of being rewritten, for one of the core successes of the plan to be curtailed.

I understand that your agency estimates that the offsetting actions will in fact increase fish survival levels. However, I have some reservations about the offsets. It is my understanding that the Hanford Reach anti-stranding operations are already a legal requirement. Is this true? If so, why is BPA considering it as an offset?

I reiterate that I applaud your leadership and determination on rate reduction and cost cutting. Nevertheless, in this case I believe that the spill proposal sacrifices too much, in the risk it poses to our depleted fish levels, for too small of a reward- the few cents it will save the average residential customer. I ask that you withdraw any spill curtailment proposals, at least until NOAA Fisheries has released their revised Biological Opinion. Please advise me of your plans.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Jim McDermott
Member of Congress