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CONTACT: Mike Hansen, BPA (503) 230-5131
Homer Perkins, Corps (503) 808-3710

**Federal agencies make progress toward spill decision,
*remain optimistic that a final program will be developed soon***

PORTLAND, Ore. – The Bonneville Power Administration and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said today that they will take more time to make a decision on summer spill at Columbia and Snake River dams.

“We remain committed to developing a summer spill reduction proposal and a package of measures that will offset the impacts to fish,” said Brigadier General William Grisoli, commander of the Northwestern Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In response to regional calls for alternative summer spill operations for fish, BPA and the Corps released on March 30 a proposed three-year pilot plan to reduce spill at four dams. They also offered a mitigation program to assure that the biological outcome is the same as or better than full spill. The agencies were to release an amended plan this week and meet with regional federal, state and tribal executives to discuss it prior to a final decision.

With strong support from NOAA Fisheries, substantial progress has been made in refining the analysis of biological impacts associated with a reduction in summer spill.

The agencies continue to work with regional parties to explore mitigation actions, or “offsets,” to provide equal or better protection for salmon and steelhead that currently benefit from the costly summer spill program. The March 30 proposal contained two offset measures as part of the proposal, with a request for comment on additional measures to make up the remaining gap in fish protection.

“We are making progress and are working on some good solid offsets that make sense,” said Steve Wright, BPA administrator. “We’re not there yet. It will require more work on our part, and continuing collaboration with a number of parties.”

BPA, the Corps and other federal agencies will convene with the states and tribes at a later date, to be determined, as the amended proposal comes together. BPA and the Corps committed to providing the new proposal in advance of the meeting.

Spill is one component of a large program under a Columbia Basin fish recovery strategy. Currently, water is spilled as one of several means to help juvenile fish safely migrate past the dams. Juvenile fish also pass by way of fish bypass systems built into some dams, and many are barged down river under a federal juvenile fish transport program.

For additional information on the summer spill proposal and comments received, please go to the following Web site: www.salmonrecovery.gov/implementation.shtml.

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