



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Northwestern Division

News Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

TUESDAY, July 6, 2004

CONTACT: Mike Hansen, BPA (503) 230-5131

Homer Perkins, Corps (503) 808-3710

Summer spill program expected to reduce costs, protect fish

PORTLAND, Ore. – A federal plan that continues to protect Columbia Basin fish while reducing summer spill at four Columbia and Snake river dams was given the go-ahead today by Brig. Gen. William T. Grisoli, Northwestern Division Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Corps decision cites a favorable findings letter issued by NOAA Fisheries that concludes the proposed spill and flow modifications meet the needs of affected fish listed under the Endangered Species Act.

“We are interested in finding sustainable fish and wildlife solutions that benefit both fish and ratepayers,” said General Grisoli. “Our overall goal is to maintain fish protection while reducing costs to the region.”

Officials from the Bonneville Power Administration say the plan will save Northwest ratepayers about \$18 to \$28 million dollars this year. “This action is a winner for the economy and environment of the Northwest by implementing an effective and efficient means to help salmon,” said Steve Wright, BPA administrator.

The plan provides for spill at Bonneville, John Day, The Dalles and Ice Harbor dams throughout July, as called for in the National Marine Fisheries Service 2000 Biological Opinion. It ends spill at Ice Harbor and John Day dams in late August after most fish have passed the dams and eliminates spill entirely in August at Bonneville and The Dalles dams. Spill, which helps juvenile fish pass safely downriver, occurs when water is sent through dam spillways instead of through power-producing turbines.

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To offset any potential harmful effects to both listed and nonlisted fish, BPA will fund additional habitat and hatchery projects, enhance July flows in the lower Snake River, strengthen an existing predator control program and improve rearing conditions for fall Chinook in the Hanford Reach. Research will continue on the survival benefits of a new spill passage technology at Bonneville Dam and on the effects of alternative spill operations at Ice Harbor Dam.

The new [summer spill program](#) incorporates public and stakeholder concerns and reflects a scaled-back plan from that originally proposed. The plan is for a one-year operation for 2004. The agencies will continue to look for long-term sustainable solutions for fish and power.

For more information on the summer spill program and other fish protection activities, visit: www.salmonrecovery.gov

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