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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3703

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APR 07 2004

April 6, 2004

Steven J. Wright
Administrator, Bonneville Power Administration
PO Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

D. Robert Lohn
Northwest Regional Administrator
National Marine Fisheries Service
7600 Sand Point Way, NE
Seattle, WA 98115-0070

Brigadier General William T. Grisoli
Commander and Division Engineer
US Army Corps of Engineers, Northwestern Division
PO Box 2870
Portland, Oregon 97208-2870

Dear Administrator Wright, Administrator Lohn, and Brigadier General Grisoli:

I am writing to you regarding the proposal for testing a new summer spill regime for the Federal Columbia River Power System. As stewards of the federal salmon recovery program and partners in tribal trust obligations to recover this resource, decisions to alter the summer spill regime must do no harm to threatened and endangered salmon, and their habitat. In that context, I believe a thorough evaluation of the practice of summer spill is warranted.

As you know, a number of stakeholders in the region have raised questions about your proposal, and perceive that it balances the West Coast's energy needs on the backs of Northwest salmon. Some take exception to the proposal's calculated biological impacts and the offsets that are being offered. They also question launching a new program while the federal Biological Opinion is being rewritten. I urge you to address these concerns before moving forward with altering federal hydropower operations.

It is my understanding that the estimated cost savings from spill reduction is intended to control energy costs in the near term. I understand that you are proposing no net loss of adult returning fish among listed species, although it remains unclear whether the mitigating measures will meet even this limited test. My greater concern is that if we do not deal comprehensively with protecting listed species and improving habitat, and if we fail to honor our obligations to Native Americans tribes, we risk paying significantly greater costs down the road with potential new listings to the ESA, costlier habitat protection, and an increasing number of lawsuits. To that extent, I would appreciate more information as to how this trial program fits with the region's long term energy strategy, including plans to diversify our portfolio by investing in conservation and renewable resources. I would like to know how BPA intends to integrate this strategy in furtherance of its public purpose responsibilities.

For too long we have treated the Columbia River system like a machine. Exceptional ocean conditions have helped give us relatively strong salmon runs in recent years. However, we cannot rely on Mother Nature's benevolence to uphold our commitment to restore Snake and Columbia River salmon and steelhead. We must consider all scientifically credible and economically viable alternatives for salmon recovery in the Snake and Columbia Rivers, or risk the loss of one of our greatest national treasures and waste billions of federal taxpayer dollars already spent on salmon recovery.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Earl Blumenauer".

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress