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Ending Summer Spill

Last November I wrote about a huge waste of money called "summer spill." This is the practice of spilling water over dams to aid the downstream passage of migrating juvenile salmon during the summer months, when there are virtually no endangered juvenile salmon in the river.

Spilling water over the federal dams in July and August saved 24 endangered salmon and cost \$77 million. While some non-threatened species are helped, most of these fish are later caught and eaten. The cost for the program breaks down to \$3 million for each endangered fish and \$4,000 for each non-listed fish. There are less expensive, more effective ways to save fish.

We have made some headway on halting this huge waste of your dollars. Public power has recommended mitigation measures that would produce more than 50,000 returning salmon at a cost of under \$2 million. In a true bureaucratic approach, the federal agencies involved have proposed to only eliminate half of this great waste. Of course they want all of the proposed mitigation. These agencies proudly announce the savings of \$35 to \$45 million from their proposed actions and further comment on the near record returns predicted for salmon. What's wrong with this picture?

While I commend them for moving in the right direction, I still believe that \$3 million per fish is ridiculous. Just because half of the waste has been eliminated does not mean their job is done. I have been writing comments and editorials and doing whatever can be done to bring sanity back into the problem. Public power has provided a path for improving the fish runs far more effectively and responsibly than spilling a valuable renewable resource over the dams. If you agree with me and want to do something, visit the web site for The Coalition for Smart Salmon Recovery, <http://www.smartsalmonrecovery.org>, and become involved.

My comments submitted to the federal agencies on their proposal:

"Stop summer spill! Your proposal is a step in the right direction. The Corps should eliminate summer spill. The benefits are almost not measurable. The cost is ridiculous. There are far more effective and responsible ways to improve salmon runs than spilling a valuable renewable resource over the dams. Klickitat PUD is in support of your proposal to reduce summer spill. We urge you to stop summer spill."

Tom D. Svendsen, General Manager

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