

**Opening Statement**  
**The Honorable Doc Hastings**  
**Ranking Republican Member**  
**Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife hearing on**  
**H.R. 2055, The Pacific Salmon Stronghold Conservation Act of 2009 and**  
**H.R. 2565, the National Fish Habitat Conservation Act**  
**June 16, 2009**

Good morning, Madam Chairwoman. Let me begin by thanking you for holding this hearing.

There are few more important, or more contentious, issues in the Pacific Northwest than that of salmon recovery. Too often, local groups come together and, after many years of hard-fought negotiations, reach consensus solutions only to have those solutions litigated. That has certainly been our experience in dealing with salmon issues, where today a single federal judge controls salmon recovery in the Columbia River system that means he controls the power bills of almost every Northwest resident and huge portions of our economy, because of our heavy reliance on hydropower.

Since we are here to talk about proposals to increase fish funding, I must note that the cost to the Federal agencies in defending management decisions in court, takes money away from important on-the-ground management activities, where the money ought to be spent.

I commend Mr. Thompson and the sponsors of H.R. 2055, the Pacific Salmon Stronghold Conservation Act of 2009, for their good intentions. The idea of seeking additional gains in river basins where salmon runs are already strong, is a good one that should be pursued, and already is being pursued by the existing partnership that exists between federal and state agencies and non-profit organizations. However, I have concerns about the bill.

While some of the intentions of H.R. 2055 are laudable, many western states will have strong concerns with any authorities for the acquisition of land or water rights that are created in the bill. Federal ownership of land in many western states has reached more than 50 percent. This Federal ownership and management has had profound effects on local economies because management decisions for Federal lands are made in Washington, D.C. In addition, federal land acquisition, by definition, erodes the tax base of local communities.

I also have concerns about creating new programs and boards at a time when funding is in short supply. Today on the House Floor, the House will be debating H.R. 2847, the Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, for Fiscal Year 2010. This appropriations bill eliminates the entire Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund that was appropriated \$80 million in this fiscal year.

Earlier this year when the President's budget request for NOAA contained a similar cut and transfer of funds to a nation-wide species recovery grant program, the outrage of Members from the Pacific Northwest was clearly and loudly expressed.

However, the House Appropriations Committee seems to have bought into the Obama plan to eliminate this long-standing, successful grant program that received \$80 million in 2009. Instead it directs funding into a vague species recovery grant program that sets aside \$50 million, which is \$30 million less, for “salmon projects.”

As currently written, not only would the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund be ended, but projects anywhere in the nation would be eligible to receive the funds. It could be spent on both Pacific and Atlantic salmon.

Last night, I filed an amendment to the appropriations bill that is printed in today’s Congressional Record that seeks to restore the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund. Quite simply, my amendment takes the words from this year’s 2009 Omnibus Appropriations bill and would insert them back into the bill to ensure the \$50 million in reduced funds is guaranteed to be directed to the traditionally funded Pacific states.

At a time when a federal judge is suggesting and threatening to remove federal hydropower dams that provide enough energy to light the City of Seattle, even though he doesn’t have that power as a judge, we certainly should be ensuring that the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund continues and isn’t eliminated by action here in the House.

Let me also note that the hollow shell of salmon grant funding that is left in the appropriations bill is \$30 million less than for 2009, that’s a deep cut when the overall bill increases spending by a whopping 12 percent.

Considering these harsh realities, I must bluntly say that I find it very, very difficult to be able to support a brand new government salmon spending program, as this bill proposes, when the successful grants-to-states program for endangered salmon funding was proposed for elimination by the Administration, and now Congress has taken the first steps to do just that.

I fear the “salmon funding fatigue” that appears to have affected the Appropriators, will make it even harder for us to adequately fund salmon conservation activities in the future. This legislation will not make those funding decisions any easier.

While I like some of the concepts in H.R. 2055, I am afraid this is not the time to be creating new programs or authorizing new funding until we get the existing funding problems resolved.

Thank you, Madam Chair.