

Remarks of Congressman Doc Hastings
Grant PUD Celebration of New Hydropower License
Wanapum Dam
August 21, 2008

Thank you very much for inviting me to be a part of this special celebration. Let me start by saying, achieving the federal government's OK on *anything*, is a difficult task--let alone a 44 year license for two major hydropower dams. And, I know the last five years since the application was filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission have been particularly challenging, and at times, frustrating. You finally made it. But, we're not here only because Grant PUD achieved signoff from Washington, DC officials, but also to celebrate the long-standing cooperative relationships, impressive technological successes, and the continuous regional leadership of Grant PUD to advance hydropower at a time when our nation's energy security and protecting our natural resources are top concerns.

Many people deserve credit for achieving this goal. I congratulate Board President Tom Flint and all of the PUD Commissioners, past and present, for their steadfast leadership at Grant PUD. I also congratulate Tim Culbertson. Tim was back in Washington, DC a couple of months ago testifying on behalf of hydropower in the face of others who want to diminish or take away this vital resource. I thank him, all of the employees and friends of Grant PUD, and the community that has stood behind these projects for helping to ensure that central Washington and the Pacific Northwest will continue to benefit from the 2,000 megawatts of clean, renewable electricity produced by these dams, and, I might add, in a very fish-friendly way.

I also want to acknowledge the efforts of Bob Lohn, Regional Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Wanapum Band, the Colville Tribe and the Confederated Yakama Tribe and others for working with Grant PUD to keep the important Vernita Bar Agreement and Hanford Reach Fall Chinook Protection Program on track. For the past 20 years, this voluntary, coordinated agreement has shown how locally-driven river management can produce one of the best spawning grounds for fall chinook salmon. I expect Bob Lohn will elaborate, but I hear that the fall chinook run this year is expected to be very good. I also understand that this has been the second best year so far for Endangered Species Act-listed steelhead passing through Priest Rapids and Wanapum than in any year since they were listed under the ESA over a decade ago. Clearly, the Grant PUD dams are continuing to do their part to protect salmon.

As we celebrate this achievement today, our nation faces one of its most serious energy crises in 30 years. There has been much talk lately about the need to reduce our dependency on foreign oil and to reduce carbon emissions. I agree wholeheartedly with those goals and believe we need to promote the energy resources that are clean, reliable and renewable. I am sure that everyone here will agree that ensuring our nation's energy security starts with recognizing and thanking those who already have a track record of producing clean, affordable and renewable energy. Grant PUD is among the pioneers.

Priest Rapids Dam has been producing hundreds of megawatts of hydroelectricity for nearly 50 years now, and Wanapum Dam has been doing so for the past 45 years. Even in 1954, when Senators Magnuson and Scoop Jackson introduced legislation authorizing Priest Rapids Dam, Grant PUD understood the important contribution that hydropower would make. At that time, it was noted that Priest Rapids Dam would create the third largest source of hydropower in the United States.

Today, the importance of these dams and the clean power they produce continues to grow. In addition to providing millions of Northwest customers with low-cost power, Priest Rapids and Wanapum dams provide the means for economic and industrial growth to Grant County, through low-cost industrial power, including the construction of new plants by Microsoft, Yahoo, and Intuit. The dams also provide firm power to keep wind plants operating reliably. In addition, Wanapum and Priest Rapids help serve 4,400 irrigation customers in one of the most productive agricultural areas in the nation.

For over 50 years, Grant PUD has kept its promise of providing and protecting vital resources for our nation, and this celebration is long overdue. On behalf of the citizens of the Fourth Congressional District, I warmly salute the many thousands of people that have worked to operate and maintain these projects, and thank the communities represented here that support them during this critical time for America's energy resources. If I could leave you with one final thought, it would be to encourage each and every one of you to continue doing all you can to support these projects now and into the future.