

SYSTEM OPERATIONAL REQUEST: #99-7

- *The following State and Federal Salmon Managers have participated in the preparation of this SOR: Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Idaho Department of Fish & Game, and Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission..*

TO: **Brigadier General Griffin** **COE-NPD**
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FROM: **Jim Nielsen, Salmon Managers**

DATE: **April 6, 1999**

SUBJECT: **Lower Columbia River Spill Program**

SPECIFICATIONS:

- Beginning on April 9, 1999, spill daily at McNary Dam up to the 120% spill cap. Spill should occur between the hours of 1800 and 0600 and instantaneous spill volumes should equal 150 Kcfs¹ (limited by the gas cap).
- Beginning on April 9, 1999, spill daily at John Day Dam up to the 120% gas cap. Spill should occur from one hour before sunset to one hour after sunrise and instantaneous volumes should equal 180 Kcfs¹ (limited by the gas cap).
- Fish movement in the lower Columbia River will be re-evaluated by the Salmon Managers on Thursday afternoon (April 8, 1999). Request for spill at The Dalles and Bonneville dams are anticipated at that time.

¹ NMFS 1998 Supplemental Biological Opinion.

JUSTIFICATION:

The passage of fish into the Lower Columbia River is occurring earlier than it has in past years (Attached). McNary Dam sampling of juvenile yearling chinook shows that passage indices this year, compared to the historic record, are of significantly greater magnitude earlier.

The historic 10% passage date for yearling chinook at McNary Dam is April 24th and this was the basis for the April 20th planning date used in the Biological Opinion. The 10% passage date for wild steelhead, based on historic data, was April 29th. Wild steelhead are also showing up earlier this year. Given this earlier passage, the initiation of spill is warranted for fish in the lower Columbia.

The sampling of fish at John Day Dam has been interrupted since April 2nd because of a screen cleaning malfunction at this project. It is anticipated that the COE will have this problem fixed and sampling will resume on the night of April 6, 1999. However, from the first two days of sampling at this project it is apparent that there are large numbers of yearling chinook and hatchery and wild steelhead passing this project (Attached) compared to last year. (This is the second year the new John Day system is in operation. Consequently, comparison to past years' data is limited.)

PIT tagged fish released from hatcheries have been recaptured at McNary Dam since March 29. Several hatchery releases have occurred above McNary Dam since mid-March. A total of 840,000-spring chinook have also been released from Ringold Hatchery. Over 300,000-spring chinook have been volitionally released from Lookingglass Hatchery and are arriving at McNary Dam. PIT tagged groups from Rapid River Hatchery, Lookingglass, the Red River Acclimation Pond and the Grande Ronde trap have been present at Lower Granite Dam since March 25. Travel time from Lower Granite to McNary, based on historical data would suggest that fish travel this distance in 11 days. Data collected thus far these year shows that Lookingglass Hatchery fish are travelling to McNary Dam in 3 days. This indicates that passage indices at Lower Granite which began exceeding 1,000 per day on March 29, probably began arriving at McNary as early as April 1.

