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MEDIA ADVISORY:
Big spill for fish begins at Bonneville Dam
Flood gates open at 6 p.m.

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JOINT NEWS RELEASE:
U.S. Army corps of Engineers
and Bonneville Power Administration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
TUESDAY, April 13, 1999
PR 27 99

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PORTLAND, Ore. — Juvenile salmon are on their way to the ocean! The Bonneville Power Administration and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are taking action to help their migration. On Wednesday, April 14 at 6 p.m., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' operators will unleash the mighty waters of the Columbia by slowly lifting the spillway gates at Bonneville Dam. This will mark the beginning of the spill for fish passage program at the Corps' Bonneville Dam. Spills at dams farther upstream began earlier in April, with spillway gates at upstream projects opened as the fish migrated downstream. With a clear blue sky and an awesome sunset expected for Wednesday evening, members of the media can anticipate a spectacular photo opportunity!

When: Wednesday, April 14, 1999
5 p.m. — Fisheries personnel from BPA and the Corps will be available for interviews 6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
— Corps dam operators will begin to open the spillway gates in a spectacular sunset operation

Where: Bonneville Dam in the Columbia Gorge is about a 40-minute drive from Portland. Take I-84 east to exit 40, proceed through the project to the Bradford Island Visitor Center, and look for guides to direct you to the location that will give you an excellent view of the opening spillway gates

Who: Therese Lamb, resource optimization manager, Bonneville Power Administration
Gary Johnson, fisheries biologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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Beginning of the spill for fish passage program at the Bonneville Dam
Fact Sheet
April 14, 1999

- The spill program on the Lower Columbia River began on April 11.
- The spill program began at John Day Dam Monday, April 12, 1999, at The Dalles Dam Tuesday, April 13, 1999 and April 14, 1999 at Bonneville Dam. All projects began spilling at 6 p.m. on their respective days.
- Spill at three Lower Snake River Dams – Lower Granite, Little Goose, and Lower Monumental – began on April 2. Spill at the fourth Lower Snake River Dam, Ice Harbor, began on April 3.
- The spill for fish passage will continue through August 31 in the Lower Columbia.
- This year marks the fifth year the federal action agencies (Bonneville Power Administration, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation) are operating under the National Marine Fisheries Service's 1995 biological opinion. The biological opinion is an assessment of federal action agencies' proposed operations for the year. The opinion is intended to ensure the federal action agencies' operations will not harm or jeopardize the survival of listed species.
- In 1998 NMFS released a supplement to the 1995 BiOp increasing the length of the spill program and the amount of spill required to pose no jeopardy to listed species.
- This approach will cost BPA an additional \$10 - \$16 million in average annual operating costs compared to last year.
- This spread-the-risk approach leaving some fish in the river and some to be transported.
- There is a difference between "flow" and "spill," two actions federal agencies take to help migrating salmon:

Flow refers to the volume of water in a stream, which effects its velocity. Flow is important in moving smolts downstream through the reservoirs, although flows above some levels do not increase smolt survival. Flow augmentation is the release of water from reservoirs when natural streamflows alone are not sufficient to meet flow targets. *Spill* is water passed at a dam through a spillway rather than being sent through the turbines. It is used to help fish get safely past the dam by guiding them away from the turbines and thereby reducing the percentage of turbine-related mortality.

- River operators are expecting higher than normal runoff this year, which will mean higher flows and cooler water that will offer improved passage conditions. Higher flows could cause higher levels of dissolved gas in the water. This can cause gas bubble trauma in fish that is similar to the bends in humans and can be fatal.

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