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## *More fish to go over the dams*

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### **Bonneville Power Administration**

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**PORTLAND, Ore.** – Key federal agencies today announced that revised spring and summer hydro operations will be implemented immediately to increase fish survival.

Hydro operators will change the volume and the duration of water spilled at four federal dams – Bonneville, The Dalles, John Day and Lower Monumental. Operations at four other projects – McNary, Ice Harbor, Little Goose and Lower Granite, will remain unchanged.

The revised operations are expected to increase salmon survival. Most experts think spilling fish over the dams is the safest and most effective way to move migrating threatened and endangered fish through the hydro system. Fish survival increases because fewer fish are subjected to passage through the hydroelectric turbines. While spill increases the risk of gas bubble trauma, moderating the volume of water spilled mitigates that threat.

The announcement came after formal consultations between the Bonneville Power Administration, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation and the National Marine Fisheries Service. While the complete Biological Opinion on operation of the federal dams will not be released until later this spring, the federal agencies were in agreement that these revised operations should be implemented immediately to maximize their contribution to survival and recovery of critically depressed salmon and steelhead runs.

"This is one more small step to improve salmon survival," said Brian Brown, Director of Hydro Operations for the National Marine Fisheries Service. "This is the spill plan we will include in the upcoming Biological Opinion -- the more difficult issues of potential dam breaching, increased spring and summer flows, improving water quality, and definition of the performance standards to recover threatened and endangered salmon are still ahead in this consultation."

The Corps and BPA on April 4 had agreed with a fish agency request to begin spill at Lower Monumental and Ice Harbor Dams on the Snake River. Spill also began at Lower Granite and Little Goose Dams on April 7 and 10 as a result of an agreement reach by regional participants of the Technical Management Team. The new changes announced today for Lower Monumental Dam begin tonight. Spill at the other affected projects will begin as determined by the Technical Management Team.

The specific changes in operation are as follows:

Bonneville Dam: Daytime spill will be increased from 75,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) to the current dissolved gas cap (120-150 kcfs) for half of the time. This operation is part of a two year study to evaluate the benefit of improved juvenile passage against the increased risk that adult salmon might fall back over the spillway and have to re-ascend the ladders. The study will directly compare the two alternative daytime spill levels.

The Dalles Dam: Spill will be reduced from 64% 24 hours/day to 40% 24 hours per day. This reduction is in response to NMFS studies in recent years showing that fish passing the spillway at the higher level suffered a higher mortality. Since the reduction in spill will result in more fish passing through the sluiceway bypass and through the turbines, this operation will be evaluated to determine the effect on overall project passage through all routes.

John Day: The daytime spill study initiated at John Day Dam last year will be continued for another two years. The study includes alternating every three days between no daytime spill and 30% total flow spill. First year results showed that daytime spill can reduce delay. The study will continue in an attempt to evaluate potential survival benefits.

Lower Monumental Dam: Spill hours will be increased from 12 hours/day to 24 hours/day in an attempt to increase the proportion of juvenile fish passing the dam by way of the spillway and thus increase project survival.

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