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## *Federal agencies spill water to help migrating fish, call for conservation*

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### **Bonneville Power Administration**

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**PORTLAND, Ore.** – Seeking to balance fish and ratepayer issues, federal agencies will spill water over Bonneville Dam this weekend in a targeted effort to aid migrating fall chinook smolts from Spring Creek Hatchery. The spill will be significantly less than last year's.

Over five million tule fall chinook smolts were released from the hatchery on the Washington side of the Columbia River across from Hood River, Ore., on Thursday. By Saturday night, the first of the smolts will reach Bonneville Dam where water will flow over the spillway to aid their downstream migration.

The traditional spill regime for salmon begins in April. However, the salmon from the Spring Creek Hatchery migrate earlier than the upstream threatened and endangered species. Given this earlier migration start, the National Marine Fisheries Service; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which operates the hatchery; the states of Oregon and Washington; and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission request this early spill each year. The returning adult Spring Creek Hatchery fall chinook are an important buffer to Endangered Species Act listed stocks in treaty and nontreaty ocean and Columbia River mixed stock fisheries.

"With the water volume in the Columbia River heading toward the worst year on record, meeting this request will not be easy," said BPA's Acting Administrator Steve Wright. "This is very complex operation involving several state and federal agencies that balances the needs of

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multiple fish species, our trust responsibilities to the Columbia River tribes and our need to be extremely judicious in how we use the water in the Columbia River Basin during this time of drought."

The targeted spill, which is only 10 percent of last year's spill, will take place from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. on Saturday, Sunday and Monday because most migration takes place at night. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service rescheduled hatchery operations to facilitate fish passage past Bonneville Dam during days of least impact to power demands. Crews from BPA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the states of Oregon and Washington will be out during the spill monitoring the amount of dissolved gas

in the water below the dam. If the dissolved nitrogen content in the water below the dam exceeds 105 percent of normal in the area chum salmon use for spawning, spill will be cut back to protect the emerging chum. The chum are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Spilled water does not go through turbines at the dam and does not produce power. The value of the water being spilled is expected to be about \$2.1 million.

"Even though this is costly and water is in short supply," said Wright, "we are committed to doing what we can to help the salmon recovery effort."

BPA is appealing to citizens of the region to conserve energy whenever possible. The best way to reduce the impact of the current drought on fish and on the economy is to conserve power.

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