

Statement of Jay Minthorn to the Northwest Power Planning and  
Conservation Council  
December 10, 2003

Good morning Madame Chair and Council members,

My name is Jay Minthorn, I'm a member of the Board of Trustees for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Vice Chairman of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

It comes as no surprise to the tribes that we're here to defend a critical piece of salmon restoration - it's a role we're accustomed to. What is particularly troubling is the brazen and irresponsible manner that summer spill has been put on the table.

The Bonneville Power Administration, after cutting \$47 million from its fish and wildlife budget, ended FY 2003 with hundreds of millions of dollars in its reserves. BPA does not need financial relief. The customers of the Bonneville Power Administration want to eliminate this program of controlled water spills as too expensive. These customers seek to apply the "savings" from eliminating spill to reduction of their federal wholesale power rates.

The survival benefits of spill are irrefutable. Biologists are estimating losses of as many as 11,000 adult returns from Hanford Reach, Snake River and Deschutes fall chinook stocks alone in both 2006 and 2007 if only August spill is eliminated. If July spill is eliminated that number goes much higher. Add the impacts to other stocks, summer chinook, steelhead, and the losses grow even larger.

There are no actions proven to offset the impacts of eliminating spill. There is no evidence that sufficient mitigation exists for a sacrifice of this magnitude. Simply restoring programs and projects that have been eliminated is a shell game and not worthy of our consideration.

The tribes support decision-making only after the effects are completely understood. Studies to assess the benefits of summer spill are ongoing and in further development. Studies to assess the impacts of eliminating summer spill are not developed.

This proposal goes way beyond the “break it – mitigate it” ideas that we’ve seen in the past. Eliminating summer spill could result in losses of TENS OF THOUSANDS of fish. As a policy maker I can’t condone a bad business decision. I wouldn’t plunder one account to fortify another. I wouldn’t undermine my own investments by pitting habitat improvements against reduced river protections. As a person, a tribal leader, I can’t condone taking my people off the river, dollars out of their pockets or our traditional food off their plates.

Thank you.

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