

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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April 19, 2002

The Honorable Norm Dicks
U.S. Congressional Representative
6th District, Washington
2467 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-4706

RE: Mitchell Act Funding Shortfalls and Effects on West Coast Salmon Fisheries

Dear Congressman Dicks:

Thank you for your letter of March 29, 2002, requesting information about the funding levels for Mitchell Act impacts on West Coast salmon fisheries. We would like to take this opportunity for an immediate response to some of the issues posed in your letter, and to provide some additional, more detailed, technical information on Mitchell Act hatchery funding shortfall impacts in a subsequent letter by mid-summer.

This matter was discussed at great length at the recent Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) meeting in Portland Oregon. The agenda consumed over two hours of time on the Council floor, including public testimony from a large number of individuals concerned about effects on sport, commercial, and tribal fisheries and dialogue from nearly every Council Member. The discussion focused on two central themes:

- The elimination of funding for the mass marking line item in the Administration's proposed fiscal year (FY) 2003 budget.
- The inadequacies of continued level funding to achieve the mitigation obligation for Mitchell Act hatchery production.

Elimination of funding for mass marking hatchery fish causes enormous harm to fisheries and contradicts rational justification of at least a portion of Mitchell Act hatchery production. In recent years, an increasing proportion of salmon fisheries in the Pacific Northwest have been able to successfully target on hatchery fish and avoid normal fishery impacts on wild fish. This is accomplished by mass marking (removing the small adipose fin) of hatchery fish before release from hatcheries. Mitchell Act marking programs support a substantial portion of the selective coho salmon fisheries off Oregon and Washington. Not marking these hatchery fish will make them indistinguishable from wild fish, requiring their release in these selective fisheries. This not only will substantially reduce the allowable quota for each of these fisheries, with the consequent fiscal losses to the businesses and communities in the economic web of these fisheries, but flies in the face of the purpose these hatchery fish were produced for in the first place: to be caught by fisheries. Large subsequent returns to hatcheries far in excess of reproduction requirements represents unacceptable economic waste.

Continuous level funding for Mitchell Act hatcheries represents a broken federal promise to mitigate for salmon losses due to federally sanctioned development projects not otherwise covered in mitigation agreements. Nearly a decade of level funding has caused the closure of seven hatchery facilities, and together with reductions in others, a 40% reduction in the number of juvenile salmon released. While mitigation agreements for some hydro-electric dams have been honored, such as the ones with private sector developers like Tacoma City and Light Company for Cowlitz River dams and PacifiCorp for Lewis River dams, and other federal projects such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers mitigation agreement for John Day Dam, mitigation for the many dams and other impacts to be covered by the Mitchell Act have not been honored. Continuous level funding is causing a slow, insidious decline, a "death from a thousand cuts" as one at the recent Council meeting testified. Also at the recent Council Meeting, one respected tribal representative stated he recalls he and his people being told that they "...need not to worry. When the hatcheries are built, there will be more salmon than there used to be". However, current runs are far short of historic levels.

As Mitchell Act hatchery production decline, so do fisheries that are of great traditional, cultural, and economic importance to the region. Mitchell Act production represents a significant contribution to West Coast fisheries from California to Alaska, and adequate funding of those programs is essential for maintaining the viability of ocean and Columbia River fisheries, and meeting treaty trust responsibilities.

Testimony from Council members noted the concerns about interactions between hatchery and wild fish that can be deleterious to wild fish. However, they noted improvements and reforms that ameliorate harmful impacts, such as sorting hatchery fish out of wild fish spawning areas and brood stock conversions to genetically compatible strains. Marking hatchery fish also provides wild fish protection in selective fisheries and the ability to sort fish in spawning areas. The mitigation promise was to maintain the number of salmon. Today, this must be an aggregate of hatchery and wild fish due to the loss of about half the historically available anadromous salmon habitat in the Columbia basin due to complete blockage by dams, and the degradation of much of the remaining anadromous habitat due to dams (including those with fish ladders) and other associated development within the region.

The Council notes the Columbia River border states have developed funding level recommendations for the FY 2003 budget that address the two issues of focus in this letter:

- **\$ 1 M for the *Columbia River Hatcheries - Mass Marking* line item**
 - an increase of \$1 M over the Administration's proposed budget

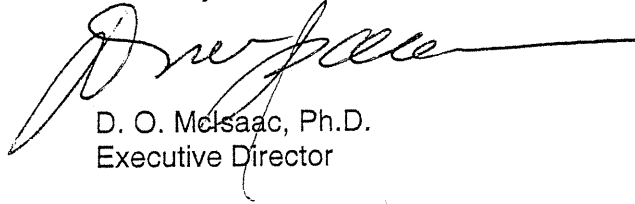
- **\$ 15.723 M for the *Columbia River Hatcheries and Facilities* line item**
 - an increase of \$2.265 M over the Administration's proposed budget

Please anticipate we will provide additional technical information on the impacts of funding shortfalls by mid-summer. The Council's Salmon Technical Team has been assigned with the task of quantifying the contribution of Mitchell Act mass marking programs to selective fisheries, and will prepare an analysis prior to the Council's June 17-21, 2002 meeting in San Francisco, California. This analysis may include the effects on quotas, seasons, fishing effort, and spawning escapements during years of both low ocean productivity and high ocean productivity. We will also attempt to assess the socioeconomic impacts to industry and community parameters.

The Honorable Norm Dicks
April 19, 2002
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On behalf of the Council and those participating in the large public response at our April Council Meeting, I would like to thank you for your leadership and commitment to Mitchell Act mitigation funding for Columbia River hatchery programs. If the Council can be of additional service, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. O. McIsaac', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

D. O. McIsaac, Ph.D.
Executive Director

CAT:rdh

Enclosure

c: Council Members
Mr. Randy Fisher
Salmon Advisory Subpanel
Salmon Technical Team
Mr. R. Z. Smith
Mr. Rob Jones

Briefing Paper

PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN
Hans Radtke

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Donald O. McIsaac

Mitchell Act Funding *Problems and Consequences*

THE PROBLEM:

The Administration's proposed FY 2003 budget for the Mitchell Act eliminates the mass marking program and reduces hatchery releases for commercial, recreational, and treaty Indian salmon fisheries. Continuous level funding for hatchery programs fails to meet the mitigation responsibility of the federal government.

FACTS:

- ✓ The Mitchell Act was passed in 1938 to conserve the fishery resources of the Columbia River. This has included fish screening and hatchery production to mitigate primarily for lost salmon production and habitat associated with construction and operation of Columbia River hydropower projects.
- ✓ Grand Coulee Dam alone, with no fish passage, eliminated over 1,200 square miles of spawning habitat. Dams now block about half of the previously accessible salmon habitat of the entire basin. Turbines and bypass systems kill an average of 3% to 11% of the remaining juvenile salmon that pass each dam; unscreened irrigation withdrawals kill millions more; slow moving water in reservoirs result in water temperatures that exceed Clean Water Act standards, delay migrations, and predator concentrations that kill millions more.
- ✓ The Mitchell Act funded 23 hatcheries and two rearing ponds in 1993. Because of level funding since then, only 18 hatcheries are currently funded, production has declined from 110 million juveniles to 65 million juveniles, and the federal government is not meeting its commitment to mitigate for lost wild salmon with hatchery produced salmon.
- ✓ Mass marking of Mitchell Act hatchery fish fuels selective fisheries, which are the mainstay of recreational fisheries offshore of Washington and Oregon and inside the Columbia River, as well commercial spring chinook in-river fisheries.

IMPACTS:

Proposed funding for 2003 is again static, requiring additional program cuts or hatchery closures, and making compliance with the ESA difficult. Not mass marking hatchery fish will substantially reduce selective fisheries, now the mainstay of salmon recreational fishing in Washington and Oregon.

Reduced releases will cause fisheries to be cut back, affecting

- Economies of coastal communities
- Tribal culture and treaty trust responsibilities
- Traditions and lifestyle for all citizens of the west coast

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

The cooperating state agencies recommend:

1. The Mass Marking line item needs to be reinstated at \$1 M.
2. The Columbia River Hatcheries and Facilities line item needs to be increased to \$15.723 to avoid cutting any existing programs.

NORM DICKS
6TH DISTRICT, WASHINGTON
COMMITTEE:
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RANKING DEMOCRATIC MEMBER
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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

March 29, 2002

<http://www.house.gov/dicks/>

RECYCLED PAPER

Dr. Donald McIssac
Executive Director
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 200
Portland, OR 97220-1384

Dear Dr. McIssac:

The hatchery chinook production from Mitchell Act funded facilities on the Columbia River is vital to the well being of the economies of communities along the Washington coast and the Columbia River basin. The fish produced from these hatcheries are an important contributor to maintaining healthy commercial and recreational fisheries and they provide a cornerstone to the business community that depends on commercial and recreational fishing activity. The harvest of these fish has provided jobs in both rural and metropolitan areas that border their migration path. I am writing to the Council at this time to express my deep concern relative to the future funding base for Mitchell Act hatcheries. I would be very interested in your thoughts and opinions about the production levels from these facilities in recent years and the relative importance these fish have on future fishing opportunities under your jurisdiction.

As you know, funding for these facilities has been stagnant for nearly ten years. I am concerned about the cuts in production that have occurred and the corresponding effects on important commercial and recreational fisheries. I would like your assistance in quantifying the decreases in production and your views about what the future effects on fisheries will be if level funding is continued over the next five years.

This is an important issue to the citizens of Washington State and I want you to know that I am committed to working with you to address the challenges that lie ahead. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future and discussing your thoughts in response to these questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Norm Dicks".

NORM DICKS
Member of Congress

BRIAN BAIRD

THIRD DISTRICT, WASHINGTON

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

WATER RESOURCES AND
ENVIRONMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

COAST GUARD AND MARITIME
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April 12, 2002

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jose Serrano
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20510

REC
JUN 3 2002

RFMO

Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Serrano:

We are writing to express our support for increased funding for the Mitchell Act hatchery program. Specifically, we are looking for an increase of \$3,265,000 over the President's budget request of \$16,522,000. We look forward to the opportunity to work with you on this important priority as you develop the Fiscal Year 2003 Commerce, Justice, State Appropriations bill.

As you may already be aware, funding for the Mitchell Act was established in 1938 for the purpose of providing salmon for the fisheries that were lost due to the construction of the federal hydropower system. Currently, hatcheries in the Columbia Basin produce over 70 percent of all salmon and steelhead utilized for harvest. The Mitchell Act hatcheries are a vital component of this production.

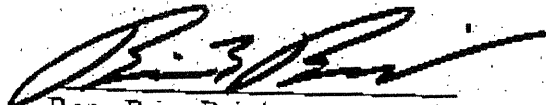
It is estimated that Mitchell Act hatchery facilities produce salmon and steelhead that generate over 600,000 angler days of fishing in the Columbia Basin, infusing \$30 million and providing 38,000 jobs into northwest communities. Additionally Mitchell Act funded salmon and steelhead hatchery production contributes substantially to Native American and commercial fisheries. Investing a total of \$19,765,000 for these hatcheries in FY2003 will allow for these important economic contributions to continue. Without the \$3,265,000 of additional funding, significant cut backs in hatchery production will occur, which in turn will adversely impact sport, commercial and tribal fisheries, as well as the local communities dependent on this activity. Also, the added funds will allow the continuation of mass marking of hatchery fish which is essential to selective fisheries that allow harvest of hatchery fish and the safe release of Endangered Species Act listed wild salmon and steelhead.

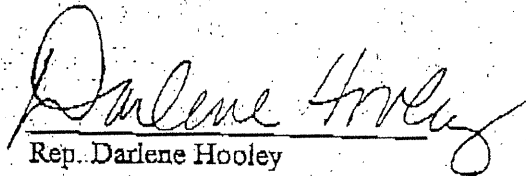
The President's budget for the National Marine Fisheries Service to support Mitchell Act hatchery production has remained at about \$15.4 million for the last five years. If this flatlining of the budget continues for Fiscal Year 2003 there will be more hatchery closures in Washington and Oregon, and up to a 50 percent cut back in the production of the popular and economically valuable spring chinook at several facilities. Over the last 10 years, hatchery budgets have not

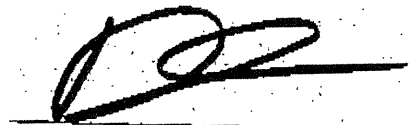
increased while costs for fish food, salaries, energy, and maintenance have. We advocate for a modest and fair increase of \$3,265,000 to ensure that the 18 Mitchell Act fish hatcheries in Washington and Oregon will continue to operate in a genetically responsible, recovery oriented and sustainable manner.

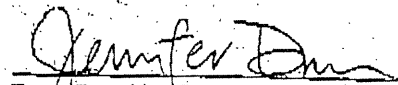
Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to working with you on this matter during the coming months.


Sincerely,



Rep. Brian Baird

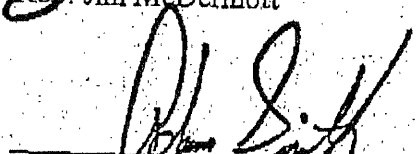

Rep. Darlene Hooley

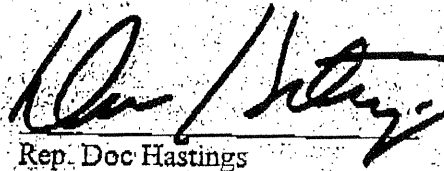

Rep. David Wu

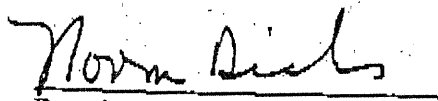

Rep. Jennifer Dunn



Rep. Jim McDermott

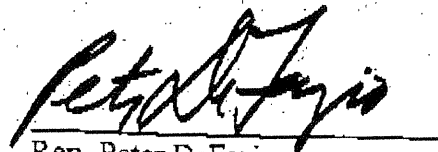

Rep. Rick Larsen

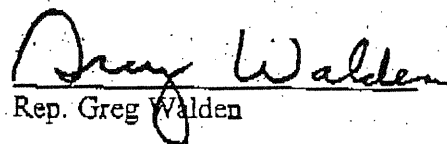

Rep. Adam Smith

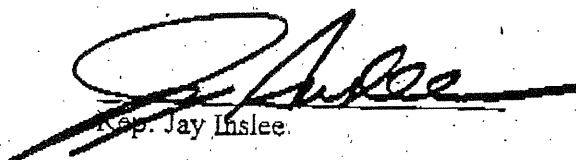

Rep. Doc Hastings


Rep. Norm Dicks


Rep. Earl Blumenauer


Rep. Peter DeFazio


Rep. Greg Walden


Rep. Jay Inslee


Rep. George R. Nethercutt

