

Corps spills water to save fish



PORTLAND (AP) — Criticism from Northwest lawmakers and industry didn't sway the National Marine Fisheries Service from going ahead with its bold plan to spill extra water over Snake and Columbia River dams to boost salmon survival.

"In a year as water short as this there aren't a lot of options," Brian Brown, acting chief of the National Marine Fisheries Service environmental and technical services division, said Tuesday in Portland.

"What we're working from is our evaluation conducted with the help of state and tribal fishery agencies that shows this operation will result in an improvement of survival of river fish," he said.

After the states of Washington and Oregon signed off on the controversial program, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers gave its approval late Tuesday to begin spilling extra water over the four hydroelectric dams on the Snake River in Washington and the four dams on the lower Columbia River.

The corps began spilling water at midnight, said spokesman Dutch Meier.

The Bonneville Power Administration had to start "wheeling power" from other sources to make up for the loss of generating capacity from diverting more water to spillways and away from turbines, corps spokesman Orel Dugger said.

Faced with a continuing drought that has reduced river flows, NMFS hopes to increase the

survival of young Snake River salmon migrating to the ocean by 5 percent to 10 percent by spilling water over the dams, rather than just trapping the fish and barging them downstream.

SNAKE River runs of sockeye and chinook have declined to the point they are protected by the Endangered Species Act. Hydroelectric dams are blamed for killing as many as 90 percent of the smolts coming out of the Snake.

The problem is that spilling extra water puts more air into the water, elevating the level of dissolved nitrogen. Scientists are split over whether fish can survive nitrogen in the water that will be 30 percent above normal.

Brown said fish can survive by diving deeper and avoiding continued exposure. People will check fish closely for signs of nitrogen distress as the spills are increased. If too many fish show skin bubbles from the nitrogen, the spills will be cut back.

Prior to the decision, Lt. Gen. Stanley Genega, director of the corps' civil works program, told the Senate Appropriations Committee in Washington, D.C., that the corps was concerned about the lack of scientific certainty.

Sens. Slade Gorton, R-Wash., and Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., urged the corps to resist the plan.

"I cannot in good conscience ask this committee to fund this program without scientific justification," Hatfield said. "When scientific experts say it is whacky and they don't know if it will do any good, I don't think the corps should be a part of that process."

Oregonians want Packwood to stay

PORTLAND (AP) — Most Oregonians responding to a new poll feel Sen. Bob Packwood should not resign — a sharp reversal from a survey taken last month.

In the survey, conducted for KPTV by Bardsley & Neidhart Inc., 54 percent said Packwood should not quit, while 43 percent said he should. Four percent were undecided.

In the poll, 801 registered voters were questioned by telephone May 3-7. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percent.

A poll conducted for *The Oregonian* and KATU-TV April 15-18 showed 58 per-

cent wanted Packwood to resign.

Pollster Laura Neidhart said she was surprised by such a large shift in only a few weeks. She speculated Packwood's standing has improved because his problems have not been subject to as much intense media attention as they had earlier. People, she said, have short memories about such things.

Neidhart noted that, of those surveyed, 71 percent said they probably or definitely would not vote for Packwood if he was to run for another term. Twenty-nine percent said they probably or

definitely would vote for Packwood.

On the other hand, among those who said they were certain to vote in this month's primary election, 45 percent indicated they probably or definitely would vote for Packwood and 55 percent said they probably or definitely wouldn't. Among that group, 69 percent said Packwood should not resign.

But Neidhart said the figures from the group almost certain to vote in the primary shouldn't even be considered. "That doesn't have anything to do with any election he would be up for," she said.

Gubernatorial candidate criticized for negative ads

SALEM (AP) — Some state and local Republican Party leaders chastised Craig Berkman on Wednesday for using negative ads against rival Denny Smith in the Republican race for governor.

The treasurer of the state Republican Party, Craig Brenton, said at a news conference that Berkman has violated the party's so-called 11th commandment to not speak of other Republicans.

"We call upon Craig Berkman as an honorable man to end all personal attacks by his campaign against Denny Smith and focus upon the vital issues affecting all Oregonians," Brenton said.

He said the "ultimate beneficiary" of the squabble between the GOP contenders is Democrat John Kitzhaber, who faces only token opposition for his party's nomination for governor in Tuesday's primary election.

Such tactics could ruin Republicans' first solid chance in 40 years to win control of both houses of the Legislature and the governor's office, Brenton said.

The GOP leaders' criticism referred to broadcast advertising for Berkman, a former state GOP chairman, that questions Smith's judgment. In turn, Smith has used broadcast ads calling Berkman a liar.

Brenton said the Smith ads were justified because Smith was responding to attacks by Berkman.

"I don't think you can expect Denny to simply sit and turn the other cheek forever," Brenton said.

Julia Brim-Edwards, Berkman's campaign manager, labeled the affair a Smith campaign tactic. She said the Berkman TV ad under fire had not aired since Thursday.

"Denny Smith is the only one on the air right now who's running a negative campaign," Brim-Edwards said. "He's throwing new charges at Craig and calling him a liar."

As state GOP chairman, Berkman clashed at times with conservatives who controlled some county organizations.

Brenton said he did not know how many of the Republican leaders objecting to Berkman's campaign tactics were helping Smith. He distributed a protest letter that included names of the top GOP leaders in 16 of the 36 county organizations.

A few others backed the protest but did not want their names on the letter, Brenton said.

Union Gap man sentenced in Yakima crimes

YAKIMA, Wash. (AP) — A Union Gap man has been sentenced to 25 months in prison for leading a crime ring of teen-agers blamed for a yearlong string of burglaries and thefts.

John T. Hitchcock pleaded guilty Tuesday in Yakima County Superior Court, but maintained his innocence.

Originally charged with 15 crimes in the Yakima area, Hitchcock pleaded guilty to three counts of second-degree burglary and two counts of first-degree theft in exchange for the other charges being dropped.

His attorney, Wes Raber, told Judge Michael Leavitt that Hitchcock acknowledged a jury likely would convict him if the case went to trial.

"It would have come down to a swearing contest between him and the youths who gave statements against him," Raber said.

The common thread in the cases was the participation of Yakima teen-agers. Three teens, who named Hitchcock as their ringleader, cooperated with police investigating dozens of crimes in the Yakima Valley.

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