

Opening Statement
The Honorable Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, Oceans and Insular Affairs
Tuesday, June 14, 2011

Legislative Hearing on H.R. 946, the
“Endangered Salmon Predation Prevention Act”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This morning’s hearing on H.R. 946, the Endangered Salmon Predation Prevention Act, focuses on an issue important to Members in the Pacific Northwest. H.R. 946 would authorize the Secretary of Commerce to issue permits enabling the states of Washington and Oregon, and tribes that are members of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, to take lethal measures against sea lions preying on endangered salmon throughout the Columbia River. The bill would also waive the application of the National Environmental Policy Act to the permit process. This would eliminate the requirement that the Secretary consider the environmental impacts and alternatives, as well as public input, to lethal action against the sea lions.

There already is a provision in the Marine Mammal Protection Act that was included in 1994 to address salmon predation by sea lions. Section 120 authorizes the Secretary to permit the intentional lethal taking of sea lions and to date, 37 California sea lions have been removed from the Bonneville Dam area.

H.R. 946 focuses on the impact of predation by California sea lions on endangered salmon. According to the Army Corps of Engineers, California sea lions have only consumed 1.4 percent of this year's salmon run, which is the lowest percentage since 2003.

Meanwhile salmon populations battle a variety of other threats, including hydropower development, habitat loss, fishing pressure, interactions with hatchery fish, pesticide exposure, and climate change.

It is critical that we support efforts to restore and maintain healthy salmon populations in the Pacific Northwest, by addressing all of these significant threats to salmon.

With that, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and learning more about this issue.