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A PUBLICATION FROM THE BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION

Journal

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BPA helps farmers in southeastern Washington reduce erosion to keep streams free of sediment that is harmful to fish habitat. ([Click here](#) for details.)

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BPA pays U.S. Treasury

BPA met its annual payment to the U.S. Treasury on time and in full for the 14th consecutive year. BPA's Treasury payment for fiscal year 1997 totaled more than \$775 million. The payment is the return on the federal government's investment in Columbia River Basin hydroelectric projects and BPA's high-voltage transmission system. This year's payment includes \$230 million for principal, \$447 million for interest and \$97 million for operations and maintenance on the federal dams operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. Since 1990, BPA has repaid the U.S. Treasury over \$2 billion of its outstanding debt. BPA is self-financed and receives no appropriations from Congress. BPA does have access to federal loans for fish and wildlife restoration and capital improvements on the federal hydroelectric and transmission systems. These loans are repaid in full through amortization schedules at current market interest rates of about 7 percent.

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Montana utilities purchase power from Hungry Horse Dam

Eight western Montana utilities signed contracts with BPA to purchase power from the Hungry Horse Reservation through 2011. The new contracts begin in 2001 when the present contracts expire. The utilities that signed the contracts with BPA include the City of Troy and seven electric cooperatives: Ravalli County, Missoula, Vigilante, Lincoln, Glacier, Mission Valley and the Montana loads of Northern Lights, which also serves consumers in Idaho. Hungry Horse Dam lies on the South Fork of the Flathead River near Kalispell, Mont., not far from Glacier National Park. When Congress authorized the dam in 1944, it gave qualified Montana buyers first rights to power from the project.

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Subscription process update meeting to be held in Spokane

A subscription process public update meeting is being held in Spokane on Nov. 25, 1997, to discuss progress to date and discuss next steps. The meeting will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at noon. There will be time available in the afternoon to discuss products and services as well as eligibility. The meeting will be held at the Spokane International Airport, West 9000 Airport Dr., Rotunda Conference Room. Those not flying in will have to pass through airport security to get to the conference room so allow yourself some additional time. If you have any questions, please contact Carolyn Whitney at (503) 230-5882 or Mike Hansen at (503) 230-4328.

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Fish budget public meeting to be held in Spokane

A conference aimed at defining a process for adopting a budget for the BPA's fish and wildlife activities between 2002 and 2006 will be held on Nov. 17 and 18, 1997. It will be held in Spokane at the Ridpath Hotel, Empire Room C, beginning at 10 a.m. and concluding at noon on Nov. 18. The meeting will be hosted by the National Marine Fisheries Service, Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Reclamation and BPA. Additional participants will include Northwest tribes, state fish and wildlife agencies, public interest groups and customer groups. If you have any questions, please contact Mike Hansen at (503) 230-4328.

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1997 precipitation levels are highest in 20-year history

The 1997 water year in the Columbia River Basin resulted in the highest precipitation total in the last 20 years. The water year runs from October through September. The basin total is calculated from the average precipitation for a group of points across the Columbia Basin. The 1997 January-July runoff above The Dalles was 159 million acre-feet. A million acre-feet is the volume of water needed to cover one million acres of land one foot deep. The runoff was 150 percent of average above The Dalles, the highest in the 68-year record and the second highest in the 119-year long-term record. Runoff at Lower Granite also ranked the highest in the 68-year record at 166 percent of normal. At Grand Coulee, the runoff was 140 percent of normal, the second highest year in the last 68 years. The basin ended the water year on a wet note as September streamflows above The Dalles Dam were the fourth highest in the 68-year record.

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Public may comment on draft guidelines for direct-assignment facilities

BPA is taking public comment on proposed guidelines for changing payment for certain transmission facilities. BPA has built and paid for much of the transmission system that delivers electricity to Northwest utilities. Under the 1984 Customer Service Policy, BPA paid construction costs for facilities needed to serve a single customer. In the last rate case, BPA agreed to follow new Federal Energy Regulatory Commission policies that require a customer to pay for new transmission facilities that benefit only that customer. These are called direct-assignment facilities. BPA proposes that it would continue to replace most existing facilities but that customers generally would pay for new transmission or increased capacity. The draft guidelines are intended to recognize BPA's unique historical role in the Northwest while following FERC's direction to focus network investments on equipment that serves many customers. The comment period closes Nov. 21.

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Squawfish sports reward season ends

The squawfish season began late this year because of high water levels in the river. The BPA-sponsored sport fishery reward program pays anglers to catch squawfish in the Columbia and Snake rivers. Squawfish prey on juvenile salmon as they migrate to the sea. The number of fish caught in the early season was small, but numbers picked up in August, and the season was extended several weeks to Oct. 17. The total catch for the year was 119,047. The program began in 1991.

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GAO releases report

The General Accounting Office released a report on Oct. 20 focusing on the potential financial risks to the government of the federal power marketing administrations, Tennessee Valley Authority and the Rural Utilities Service. The report was requested by U.S. Reps. John Kasich of Ohio and John Doolittle of California. The report concludes that BPA's net cost to the government is \$398 million annually. Most of the net cost, \$377 million, is attributed to BPA's low-interest rate on outstanding debt for the federal dams. The balance is unfunded employee post-retirement benefits. The report states that BPA poses a remote risk that it would be unable to pay its costs through 2001. After 2001, BPA has a "reasonably possible" risk of not being able to pay its costs. BPA is working to lower its costs after 2001. BPA and the Northwest Power Planning Council have created a cost management group to review BPA's costs and look for ways to make further cost cuts. A final report will be submitted to congressional committees by March 1998. BPA's costs will be reduced considerably beginning in 2012 when BPA pays off its debt for the Washington Public Power Supply System's Nuclear Plant 2. As the Supply System's debt is paid off, BPA's costs and price of its wholesale power will be reduced, and BPA's cost risk to the government will be remote.

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Vernita Bar operations help salmon

BPA teams up with mid-Columbia River dam operators from mid-October to the weekend before Thanksgiving every year to enhance spawning conditions at Vernita Bar. The bar is in Washington about 4 miles downstream from Priest Rapids Dam and represents nearly 40 percent of the spawning area in the Hanford Reach. The reach is the only salmon spawning area in the Columbia River above Bonneville Dam. River operators discovered the impacts the hydro system can have on this active salmon population in the mid-1970s when the Columbia River was drawn down to low levels in the Hanford Reach. The drawdown exposed hundreds of redds, or nests containing fertilized eggs, that adult salmon had made in the bar. The eggs dried up so no salmon hatched that year. River operators agreed to manipulate the flows of the water during the critical October-November spawning season to make sure this wouldn't happen again. The operators signed the Vernita Bar Agreement in 1988 formalizing their efforts. The parties to the agreement are Grant, Chelan and Douglas counties public utility districts; the National Marine Fisheries Service; the states of Oregon and Washington; and the Yakama, Umatilla and Colville tribes. Chinook salmon activities are monitored in the late fall by a team of fishery biologists representing Grant PUD, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, NMFS, BPA and the tribes.

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BPA supports "no-till" agriculture

The fertile rolling farmland of southeastern Washington known as the Palouse Hills is renowned for the grain crops it produces. But that region's use of conventional cultivation with its reliance on repeated tillage has come at a cost. The cost is the loss of valuable topsoil evidenced by visible subsoil on hilltops and sediment basins full of eroded topsoil. BPA is concerned because this erosion results in increased sediment in streams that is harmful to fish habitat. BPA supports alternatives to conventional tillage techniques referred to as "no-till" or "zero-till" agriculture. Instead of a plow, no-till uses a drill that is

actually a disc that cuts a narrow groove in the topsoil. In a single pass, these drills prepare the soil, place the seed and apply fertilizer. Residues from the preceding crop, including stubble and roots, are left in place. These residues hold the topsoil in place when the combined effect of surface freezing and rainfall erode soils pulverized by conventional tillage. Saving the root system, also maintains soil structure which is essential to nutrient recycling. Although no-till has been widely accepted in the prairie states where it has been used to prevent wind erosion, it has been slow to take hold in the Northwest. As part of the Fish and Wildlife Model Watershed Program, BPA has offered financial incentives to farmers to encourage them to convert to no-till techniques. BPA hopes to improve fish habitat by keeping topsoil in place.

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Public Involvement

Status Reports

BPA/Lower Valley Transmission Project. Idaho and Wyoming – To resolve a voltage stability problem in the Jackson and Afton, Wyo. areas; new 115-kV line proposed on existing right-of-way where possible. A final EIS is being developed. Call to be added to the mail list.

BPA/PGE Transmission Support Project EA. Oregon – A supplemental EA is available. Call to receive a copy.

Big Eddy-Ostrander Vegetation Management EA. Oregon – To control vegetation on two segments of the 500-kV transmission line right-of-way. One segment, about 8 miles long, is from Lolo Pass to near Parkdale. The other segment, about 1 mile long, is east of Parkdale. The Forest Service is a partner. Scoping is under way. See Close of Comment. Call to be added to the mail list.

Bonneville-Hood River Vegetation Management EA. Oregon – To control vegetation on the 115-kV transmission line right-of-way between Bonneville Dam and Hood River in the Columbia Gorge scenic area. The Forest Service is a partner. Scoping is under way. See Close of Comment. Call to be added to the mail list.

Columbia Windfarm #1. Washington – The final EIS (#2682) is available. Call to receive a copy.

Fourmile Hill Geothermal Development Project EIS (Calpine). Northern California – A geothermal power plant and about 24 miles of new transmission line have been proposed on Forest Service land in the Klamath and Modoc forests. The Bureau of Land Management has the lead. BPA is a cooperating agency. The draft EIS is available. Call to receive a copy.

Grande Ronde River Spring Chinook Project. Oregon – Spring chinook supplementation program. An EA is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Grizzly Substation Fiber Optic Line Project EA. Oregon – To string about 16 miles of new fiber optic cable along BPA's John Day-Grizzly No. 1 transmission line into the Grizzly Substation. Also to acquire a 50-foot right-of-way along existing county roads on the Crooked River National Grasslands from the Grizzly Substation to the Big Eddy-Redmond No. 1 transmission line, a distance of about 5 miles. Scoping is under way. See Close of Comment.

Methow Valley Irrigation District EA. Northern Washington – A proposal to convert the open canal irrigation system to pressurized pipes and wells. An EA is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery EIS. Idaho – Supplementation of anadromous salmonids. The ROD is available. BPA has made a decision to fund this project. Call to receive a copy.

Northwest Regional Power Facility. Washington – To construct a combustion turbine near Creston. The final EIS (#2887) and a Supplement Analysis is available. Call to receive a copy.

Telephone Flats Geothermal Project EIS (Calenergy). Northern California – A geothermal power plant and about 21 miles of new transmission line have been proposed on Forest Service land in the Modoc Forest. The Bureau of Land Management has the lead. BPA is a cooperating agency. The draft EIS is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Upper Snake River Fish Culture Facility. Idaho – A proposal to purchase a tribal hatchery for redevelopment of Yellowstone cutthroat and redband trout. An EA is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Vegetation Management Program EIS. Regionwide – To develop principles for cost-effective, consistent, efficient and environmentally acceptable means of controlling vegetation to maintain a safe and reliable transmission system. The Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management are cooperating agencies. The draft EIS is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Programmatic EIS. Washington – The Bureau of Reclamation is taking the lead on this project. BPA is a cooperating agency. The draft programmatic EIS is being prepared. For further information or to receive a copy, contact John Tiedeman, BOR, at (509) 575-5848 ext. 238.

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Close of Comment

Big Eddy-Ostrander Vegetation Management EA: **Nov. 28**

Bonneville-Hood River Vegetation Management EA: **Nov. 26**

Grizzly Substation Fiber Optic Line Project EA: **Nov. 7**

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Acronyms:

EA: Environmental Assessment

EIS: Environmental Impact Statement

FONSI: Finding of No Significant Impact

NOI: Notice of Intent

ROD: Record of Decision

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<http://www.bpa.gov/Corporate/KC/home/journal/>.

We welcome all comments from you at Journal-CKC, Bonneville Power Administration, P.O. Box 3621, Portland, OR 97208-3621 or enballa@bpa.gov.

For More Information or To Get Involved:

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