



The Annual Fish Tale

It is again that time of year when I get on my soapbox against government waste. I know this is my most popular column. I get more comments back on this topic than the other 11 months' articles combined.

It is a passionate issue.

That's right, it's August. A federal judge has ordered the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to spill water over the Columbia and Snake river dams for another month, even though more than 99 percent of the fish the spill is intended to help already have migrated downriver. In 2005, the spill was estimated to cost \$75 million. Last year, it was only \$62 million.

Still, this is a huge waste of money. In August, there are no little fish swimming downriver.

I subscribe to a trade publication called "Clearing Up." Last year, the editor reported "the cost to BPA ratepayers of ESA (Endangered Species Act)-related salmon recovery is a larger amount than the sum of all listed species mitigation projects in the nation."

I have not seen the tally of all the other projects, but the cost to Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) ratepayers has now surpassed the \$7 billion mark.

In another article, Pacific PUD wrote to its ratepayers that the utility spends more money on salmon recovery through power it buys from the BPA than it does on the personnel who keep the lights on.

I thought this was a fairly dramatic comparison, and wondered how Klickitat PUD compares. It turns out this is the same for Klickitat PUD. The part of our BPA bill that goes to salmon recovery is larger than the annual payroll for the operations section of our utility.

If it sounds like I am against salmon recovery, that could not be further from the truth. In fact, I am very much in favor of promoting efficient, cost-effective salmon and steelhead protection and recovery.

I just believe you should get something for your money.

If you want to find out more about this issue, I recommend you contact Northwest RiverPartners at www.nriverpartners.org.

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