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# Annual Fish Tale

It is once again that time of year when I get on my soap box against government waste, my most popular column. I get more comments back on this topic than all other articles combined. It is a very passionate issue.

That's right, it's August. This year federal agencies issued a new biological opinion on salmon recovery. Also, a settlement with many of the tribes and states has been negotiated that will add even more costs. The federal judge assigned to oversee river operations has continued to order 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 that the spill is intended to help already have migrated down the river.

This year, the price tag for this spill could easily exceed \$100 million, a huge waste of money. In August, there are no little fish swimming down the river. The settlement is estimated to cost another \$100 million each year. The total cost of the fish and wildlife program, including spill, is nearing a billion dollars a year.

I subscribe to a trade publication called Clearing Up. The editor reported that "the cost to BPA (Bonneville Power Administration) 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 BPA ratepayers has now topped the \$8-billion mark.

Pacific County PUD wrote to its ratepayers that it "spends more money on salmon recovery via power it buys from Bonneville than it does on the personnel that 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 science-based, 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.nwriverpartners.org](http://www.nwriverpartners.org).

**Tom Svendsen**  
**General Manager**

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