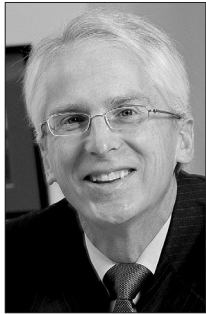


Our Powerful River Makes Life Better



Steve Wright is chief executive officer and administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration. BPA is a federal agency that markets wholesale electric power from 31 federal hydro projects, one nuclear plant and several other small, nonfederal power plants. Wright is retiring in January.

By Steve Wright

Did you know that our electricity system in the Pacific Northwest is the envy of the rest of the world? We may not think about it when we switch on our coffeemakers or televisions, but the electricity that powers them is special in ways that make us fortunate.

For one thing, it is cleaner, with the lowest emissions of any region in the country. Close to half of the Northwest's electricity comes from hydroelectric dams, especially the large federal dams on the Columbia River, without the pollution that coal and gas-fired power plants produce. Without the Columbia River dams, the Northwest would need 15 more coal plants worth of power.

For another thing, our energy is less expensive, keeping more money in our pockets and attracting jobs so we can enjoy the great opportunities all around us.

This year, we at the Bonneville Power Administration are pausing to consider the remarkable value of the Columbia River and the power it provides. Please join us. The occasion is the 75th anniversary of BPA, created the year Bonneville Dam was completed, to market and deliver the power from it and other federal dams, without profit, as a public service.

The anniversary is less about BPA than the Northwest values we reflect, and the stewardship of the Columbia River we share. Stewardship on your behalf because these are public resources designed to be operated not for profit, but for your benefit.

At BPA, we draw our strength from the Northwest and return that strength in the service we provide. Early on, our hydropower—through a rapidly expanding network of transmission lines—built the ships (one aircraft carrier per week in 1943) and planes that, according to President Harry Truman, were critical to winning World War II.

Woody Guthrie, hired by BPA, commemorated that hard work in his songs. The transmission system extended electricity to not-for-profit utilities serving all corners of the region. Today, that system is supplemented by a fiber optic network that helps

support a rapidly growing digital economy and will likely someday support technological advances like the smart grid.

In proud partnership with your local electric utility, we strive to keep your rates—already among the lowest in the country—as low as possible, while protecting the scenic Northwest environment we all hold so dear.

Our values have evolved with the region. Our biggest debates have involved the question of how best to care for and share the incredible Columbia River. They have proven especially tough precisely because we all care so much about it.

The Northwest Power Act built on the regional legacy of clean, low-cost electricity by encouraging BPA to work with your local electric utility to provide incentives for energy efficiency when it cost less than developing new power plants. In the last 30 years, the region has saved enough power to avoid construction of eight to 10 additional power plants. Our bills are lower and our air is cleaner as a result.

The act also recognized that the same hydroelectric system that brought so much value carried severe consequences for salmon and tribal cultures that long depended on them.

I will never forget Terry Goudy-Rambler of the Yakama Nation describing the mist of Celilo Falls on her face as a child and the loss of the vital community surrounding that tribal fishing ground. The consolation was that her recollection came as we signed the Columbia Basin Fish Accords, a historic partnership between tribes, states and a federal government that today see each other as equals with a true shared stake in the future of Northwest salmon. Under our obligation to mitigate the impacts of federal dams, BPA ratepayers today fund what we believe to be the world's largest program to protect and rebuild fish species.

BPA by statute is a Northwest entity and our strength is intertwined with yours. Please join us at Bonneville Dam September 15 to celebrate our tremendous river and how much it has done for all of us. ■

For more information, including photos and videos, visit www.bpa.gov/goto/75.