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Power swap with Canada to benefit Pacific Northwest

Bonneville Power Administration

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BELLINGHAM, Wash. — Whatcom County residents can expect a more reliable supply of power this winter, thanks to the Bonneville Power Administration's recent efforts to improve transmission lines in northwest Washington.

On Oct. 21, BPA completed the first phase of a project that will bolster reliability in the Puget Sound area. It will also make it easier for British Columbia and the U.S. to swap power.

"This is good news for the region," said Project Manager Lou Driessen. "It will provide additional capacity for anticipated increases in power transactions, and will make the U.S. and Canadian hydroelectric systems more flexible. This will potentially benefit all utilities in the Northwest because more power will be transmitted over the new lines as compared to the original ones."

This summer, BPA tore down 12 miles of the single-circuit 230-kilovolt Bellingham-Custer transmission line. The line runs between BPA's Custer and Bellingham substations in Whatcom County. The old line has been replaced with a new double-circuit 230-kilovolt transmission line that more than doubles the old line's capacity. The new line also will help reduce local power disruptions. The upgrade makes better use of the existing right-of-way, and precludes the need for more land to build additional transmission lines. The project was completed ahead of schedule and under budget at a cost of \$10 million dollars.

The next phase is scheduled to begin in March and is expected to be completed by Sept. 30, 1997. BPA will replace the existing 24-mile, 230-kilovolt lines running between BPA's Bellingham Substation south to Puget Power's Sedro Wooley Substation. BPA will own, operate and maintain the new lines.

BPA sought advice from Whatcom and Skagit County citizens and environmental groups before making changes to the line. "Without input from local residents we would not have been able to complete this project," Driessen said. "We thank those who participated in the public process for this project."

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