



***NEWS RELEASE:***  
***BPA's "Issues '98"***  
***Plotting a Course for the Columbia River***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**THURSDAY, June 4, 1998**  
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**PORTLAND, Ore.** The Northwest's economy depends on hydropower from the Columbia River. Now, the region must decide how it will retain and enhance the benefits of the river in the years ahead.

"The Columbia River hydro system faces some of the greatest challenges in its 60-year history," said Jack Robertson, acting administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration. "We want to have a conversation with the people of the region about the future of one of their most vital natural assets."

In "Issues '98," BPA will describe challenges facing the agency and receive public comments. Meetings are scheduled for June 11 in Seattle, June 12 in Spokane and June 22 in Portland (see attached schedule). At stake is nothing less than the ability of the region to save salmon, cover the system's costs and preserve the benefits of competitively priced hydropower.

BPA has defined five broad categories of issues for discussion: cost management; future fish and wildlife funding; power markets and sales; electrical transmission services; and risk management.

One of the most difficult issues involves the way BPA deals with uncertainties surrounding its costs and revenues. The agency must ensure that it is able to repay its obligations to the U.S. Treasury on money borrowed to build the power system. Among the uncertainties faced by BPA are:

- Annual variations in water supply used to generate electricity.
- Electricity price volatility in a deregulated power market.
- BPA's ability to reduce its costs and still perform its mission.
- Uncertain costs of restoring salmon runs.
- Other costs associated with competition and earlier capital investments.

BPA intends also to take final public comment on how it might capture the full \$146 million in savings recommended by a special Cost Review Panel. This panel of outside experts suggested various ways that BPA might reduce the costs of its operations. BPA must now make final decisions on how it will proceed.

The public is invited to attend the three scheduled meetings, or submit written comments from May 19

to June 26. BPA has prepared a "Keeping Current" publication that gives an overview of the issues, as well as five fact sheets that provide more detailed information. These publications are available through BPA's Public Information Center. To request a copy of the publications, call 1-800-622-4519.

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### **SCHEDULE**

**May 19, 1998** -- Public comment period begins.

**June 11, 1998 1-5 p.m.** -- Doubletree Hotel - Spokane City Center, 322 North Spokane Falls Court, Spokane, WA

**June 12, 1998, 1-5 p.m.** -- Radison Hotel - Seattle Airport, 17001 Pacific Highway South, Seattle, WA

**June 22, 1998, 1-5 p.m.** -- BPA - Rate Hearings Room, 911 NE 11th Ave., Second Floor, Portland, OR

**June 26, 1998** -- Public comment period closes.

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