



NEWS RELEASE:
BPA Administrator sees energy benefits for Northwest Tribes

Bonneville Power Administration

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PORTLAND, Ore. – Northwest Tribes can reap future benefits from energy deregulation if they anticipate opportunities in the changing marketplace, BPA Administrator Judi Johansen said today.

“BPA is providing funding and making available technical expertise to help the Tribes assess economic opportunities available to them,” said Johansen. “The Tribes will be a key customer group as deregulation opens Northwest markets to competition.”

The Economic Development Corporation of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians has received a BPA grant to assist its members. This grant came after a full-day deregulation workshop BPA held for the Tribes in August of 1997. The EDC will arrange workshops with presentations on trends and options available to Tribes. And, it will work with BPA and local utilities to arrange for energy profiles of reservations, including load forecasts.

Dave Tovey, ATNI-EDC President, said, "We hope this is the first of many opportunities to engage the energy industry in partnerships with Indian country. The EDC will look for more opportunities to partner with other federal, state and private agencies to assist the Tribes in economic growth."

Johansen, speaking before a conference held at the Spokane Valley Double Tree, Dec. 1 and 2, said the effort begins with the Tribes themselves as they analyze their needs and prepare to participate in a competitive energy market. Some Tribal groups will work with local utilities to reap the benefits of competition. Some may wish to form their own consumer-owned utilities, which BPA would offer to supply with low-cost power. As states pass laws allowing retail access to markets, others may be able to band together to purchase electricity.

Johansen explained: “When Congress passed the Energy Policy Act in 1992, it paved the way for competition in the electric power industry, first at the wholesale level and later down to the retail consumer. The energy business is complex and changing fast. Northwest Tribes are well positioned to benefit from deregulation, and BPA is making its expertise available to assist them.”

Johansen asserted that the benefits of low-cost hydropower from the Columbia River system should

flow to Native Americans and other small consumers and groups. Low-cost electricity can be used to energize many kinds of economic development on tribal lands. BPA is now in the process of deciding how to market the power in the period 2001 to 2006.

“The supply of federal Columbia River System hydropower is limited and the demand for it is very strong,” she said. “That’s another reason why Native Americans should understand the issues and plan for the future. BPA has reduced its costs and expects its rates to remain highly competitive.”

“BPA has provided an avenue for the Tribes to have a voice in this decisionmaking process regarding the Subscription Proposal,” said Sonya M. Tetnowski, Tribal Energy Coordinator for ATNI-EDC. “Each Tribe holds a unique perspective regarding regional energy efforts, and the ATNI-EDC would like to help promote intertribal cooperation, and look closely at the energy industry as an economic development tool.”

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