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Eligibility criteria remain the same

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Bonneville Power Administration

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PORTLAND, Ore. – The Bonneville Power Administration Thursday announced that it would retain its current policies regarding service to new consumer-owned utilities. Such utilities must own the distribution poles and wires needed to serve retail consumers in order to qualify for BPA's lowest cost power, the agency said.

The decision comes after lengthy public comment on standards for service proposed in May. Some respondents from the four Northwest states served by BPA sought changes that would allow entities that distributed power over poles and wires owned by others to purchase BPA's lowest cost power. The vast majority of comments, however, indicated that BPA should not change its standard for service.

BPA decided to stick with its current ownership requirement because it provides a clear and tested standard. To do otherwise would put the agency in a regulatory role. Furthermore, federal law gives preference to public agencies and cooperatives in the sale of low-cost federal hydropower. These utilities must own the assets necessary to deliver the power. They must also take on the responsibility for serving all retail consumers in their area.

This policy does not change the value of benefits per capita flowing to Montana residents through BPA power sales to existing utilities. These benefits are currently greater than those going to all types of customers in each of the states of Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

A recent recommendation by the public utility commissions of the four states allocates an additional 24 megawatts to residential customers of Montana Power Company between 2001 and 2006. This amount would be roughly proportional to the allocations to the other states for residential customers of their investor-owned utilities.

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