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Johansen announces departure from BPA; Wright to be named acting administrator

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Bonneville Power Administration

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CONTACTS: [Ed Mosey](#), BPA (503) 230-5359

PORTLAND Ore. – Bonneville Power Administrator Judi Johansen announced today that she is leaving BPA to become executive vice president for government affairs and regulation at PacifiCorp. Secretary of Energy Bill Richardson will name Steve Wright, currently BPA's deputy administrator, as acting administrator effective November 17 when Johansen leaves.

"Judi has been an outstanding leader during a very interesting and hectic time for the energy industry. In the face of many challenges--ranging from industry deregulation to a chaotic energy market--she guided the Bonneville Power Administration to financial stability, helped forge a unified Northwest fish and wildlife plan, and forwarded conservation and renewable resources," said Richardson.

Johansen has served as administrator since June 1998, returning to BPA from a two-year stint as vice president of business development for Avista Energy, based in Washington state. She had previously been BPA's vice president of generation supply.

During her tenure, Johansen enjoyed strong bipartisan support from the region's congressional delegation. She steps down as BPA's administrator on November 17, since continued employment at BPA could pose a conflict of interest. She recused herself from BPA decision making when PacifiCorp approached her a few weeks ago.

Wright, who was named deputy administrator earlier this year, has spent a substantial amount of his time as head of BPA's Washington, D.C. office where he was liaison to the Department of Energy, Congress and various public interest groups. "Steve's experience

will help him guide BPA until a permanent administrator is named," Richardson said. "We are confident that his talent, combined with the strong management skills of Steve Hickok, BPA's chief operating officer, will produce a strong team effort at Bonneville."

Richardson particularly noted the importance of BPA proceeding energetically with the agency's major initiatives, including developing a Northwest regional transmission organization, putting contracts and rates in place for the post-2001 period and completing a basinwide salmon recovery strategy.

In announcing the news to employees, Johansen said her most prominent emotion is pride. "I am proud

to be associated with you in your public service to the region, providing a clean, low cost, safe and reliable power supply," she said. She also had special praise for Steve Hickok, whom she cited for his "tremendous support as chief operating officer during my tenure as administrator."

Although Johansen's administration at BPA has been relatively brief, it has been eventful, and her legacy is considerable. At her inaugural address in June 1998, Johansen laid out a vision for BPA.

She said she wanted to stabilize BPA economically, so that the agency would have a solid foundation for proceeding into the new century. That goal was substantially realized last week with signing of the new power subscription contracts with BPA customers. Most of those contracts are for 10 years. This stability lays a foundation for another of Johansen's goals: preserving the federal hydro benefits of the region for the Pacific Northwest. Under her stewardship, BPA has managed the extreme volatility of current power markets, ending the current fiscal year with financial reserves that will ensure continued stability in face of both unpredictable weather and an unpredictable market.

She set a goal to move BPA and the region toward a regional transmission organization that would ultimately provide greater reliability for the grid, better congestion management, efficiencies that can be achieved only through coordination and a system that truly supports an open competitive market. At her urging, BPA voluntarily joined with the region's investor-owned utilities to form RTO West, a regional transmission organization that is currently awaiting approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

She called for a unified fish and wildlife plan, something many thought impossible. She has worked vigorously with other regional entities to bring about a true regional approach to fish and wildlife protection and mitigation. Nine federal agencies, under the banner of the Federal Caucus, combined to work closely to produce an All-H plan that for the first time addresses fish species throughout the region across all habitats. It addresses harvest and hatcheries, as well as hydro operations. The National Marine Fisheries Service is scheduled to unveil the plan this coming December.

Her vision also included a focus on employees, whom she called BPA's most valuable resource. She instituted changes to move BPA toward a high performing organization. She

raised an employee issues to the level of all other issues by including an employee focus in managers' contracts. She didn't just want BPA to stand out among federal agencies, but took steps to make BPA a great place to work, period.

She set about to build stronger ties with an important group in the region--Northwest tribes. She endorsed BPA grants to the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians to help better involve tribal governments in BPA decision making. Acknowledging the importance of a government-to-government role with the tribes, Johansen made more visits to tribes than any other administrator in BPA's history.

Her vision also included, in her words, "leaving as light a footprint on the environment as possible." Under her leadership, BPA took great strides toward moving renewable power and conservation along. In fact, last July, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory recognized BPA as tops in the country in new renewable resource capacity developed as a result of green marketing. She also was instrumental in seeing that a conservation /renewables discount became part of the new customer power sales contracts.

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