

IRRIGATION BUYBACK SUCCESSFUL

75,000 acres and 90-120 aMW reduction expected.

Thanks to increasing interest from farmers, BPA expects a load reduction of 10 to 20 aMW during the months of May through September from its public utility irrigation load buydown program. The irrigation buyback offers an average \$75 per MWh credit to utilities that reduce irrigation load. About 2 dozen farmers have already signed up through their utilities, and more are joining daily. BPA recently made a few changes to the program, allowing harvesting of cover crops and slightly relaxing program parameters. The changes are encouraging more farmers to participate.

BPA expects to save an additional 80 to 100 aMW by not pumping water 300 feet up from Lake Roosevelt, behind Grand Coulee Dam, to Banks Lake where it is distributed to irrigators in a second program, which runs from April 1 through Sept. 30. To date BPA has received applications totalling over 75,000 acres. "We are pleased with the irrigators' response," said Ron Rodewald, BPA public utilities specialist and one of the program managers. "At \$330 an acre, this is a great value for BPA ratepayers," he added. BPA is paying just under \$70 a megawatt hour for this power. Currently, market power is approximately \$250 to \$300 megawatt hour. The total cost to BPA is estimated at \$24.75 million.

All irrigation-intensive rotation crops such as potatoes, sugar beets, wheat, barley, oats, alfalfa, sweet corn and mint are candidates for the program. *(Reported by Barb Canaday)*