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 BPA Journal

March, 1999



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BPA completes Y2K tests this month

BPA expects to complete Y2K testing on its systems by March 31. These tests show that BPA's 15,000-

mile transmission system will continue to operate reliably and safely. BPA's testing and remediation program is thorough and will be completed by March 31, months before the year 2000. BPA's technical staff began working on [Y2K](#) in 1995. The program involves identifying and testing automated systems; replacing, upgrading or discontinuing those systems with Y2K problems; and contingency planning. BPA is also working with its customers, large Northwest utilities and generation suppliers to provide reliable service on the Pacific Northwest's largest high-voltage transmission system. In the highly unlikely event that the automated systems don't work, BPA can operate the systems manually.

BPA has already successfully tested the Real-Time Operations Dispatch and Scheduling System. The system helps to run several Transmission Business Line operations including scheduling, automatic generation control and Power Business Line plant operations. BPA also has tested transmission system equipment and found only a few minor problems that are being fixed. For more information about BPA's Y2K readiness program, visit the BPA Web site at www.bpa.gov/corporate/GI/Y2K/Y2K.html or call 800-622-4520.

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Initial Rate Proposal expected to be published in May

BPA now expects to publish its initial power rates proposal in mid- to late May. Preparations for this rate case have been more complex than BPA originally envisioned and some delay has been needed to conduct the technical analysis. Another important issue in this rate case is how BPA's rates will help achieve public responsibilities for energy conservation and fish and wildlife. Time has also been required to accommodate additional discussions and briefings for customers and other interested parties before the formal rate case begins.

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First fish are released from the Yakima Hatchery

In mid-February, 396,000 spring chinook were transported from the Yakima Hatchery (also known as the Cle Elum Supplementation and Research Facility) to acclimation sites alongside the Yakima River in central Washington. These are the first fish to be taken from this "supplementation" hatchery designed to test advanced fish culture techniques. Acclimation sites are used to enable the fish to imprint on the water in which they will be released and, hopefully, return as adults. The acclimation period also allows time for the fish to overcome transportation induced stress prior to release into the river. The fish will acclimate in river water that is pumped into the bank-side raceways through March 15. At that time, the gates will be pulled allowing the fish to migrate directly into the Yakima River for their journey to the ocean. Construction of the three-acclimation sites for this project started last April. By design, the first year of production was limited to less than 50 percent of planned capacity. The planned full performance level for the hatchery complex is to produce 810,000 spring chinook smolts annually. The project is funded by BPA.

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WNP-2 moving to two-year fuel cycle

This month, the Washington Public Power Supply System's Nuclear Plant 2 will reduce power to 65 percent of its full output until about April 10. Then, as usual, it will shut down until June during the spring runoff. But, it will not be the usual spring refueling. Instead, WNP-2 will shut down this spring to save its existing fuel as it begins a transition from an annual to a biennial fuel cycle. WNP-2's schedule moves to 18 months when it refuels this September, and then not again until April 2001. The next refueling is expected to be 24 months after that.

Other U.S. nuclear plants have already moved to either an 18-month or two-year refueling cycle. Until now, BPA has asked the Supply System to turn off the nuclear plant during the spring runoff. But, a 1997 review of the economics showed that there is now a market for WNP-2 power even in spring, making it more economical to operate the project year-round. An open, competitive wholesale power market, larger intertie capacity, growing power loads and increasing limits on hydro to protect endangered salmon all helped make the difference. Refueling the nuclear plant every other year instead of each year will increase total power production, use of the asset and revenues, and will lower cost per kilowatt-hour.

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Sen. Smith speaks at BPA

[Sen. Gordon Smith \(R-Ore.\)](#) said he is opposed to breaching the four lower Snake River dams when he spoke to BPA employees in mid-February. It's not appropriate to tear down basic infrastructure when it supplies the very energy that has brought prosperity, he said. In his new role as chairman of the U.S. Senate Water and Power Subcommittee, Smith said he will look at alternatives to dam removal. He mentioned controlling predators, setting recovery goals and requiring fish-friendly turbines as a condition of dam relicensing. Smith said that incentives-based recovery plans such as the Oregon plan for coho salmon are illegal under the Endangered Species Act, and that, "instead of a heavy bureaucratic club, we need to have policies that are common sense."

Electricity restructuring is an important issue for Congress this year and is "remarkably complicated," said Smith. Public power in the Pacific Northwest is some of the lowest-cost power in the world. There's "a whole lot of downside" for the Pacific Northwest in power industry restructuring, Smith said. "We have to defend our unique position," he said. "If we do this right, no one will notice the change. If we do it wrong, I'll be back picking peas in no time."

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BPA continues environmental studies on proposed transmission line

BPA is continuing environmental studies on a proposed high-voltage transmission line to the southern Oregon Coast. [Nucor Corp.](#) is proposing to build a steel plant in North Bend, Ore. "The environmental studies are critical to the proposed project that would reinforce BPA's transmission system in the southern Oregon coast, making it possible for Nucor to build a steel mill there," said BPA Administrator Judi Johansen. "Nucor has agreed to pay for these studies whether they build the plant or abandon their plans. If for some reason BPA is unable to build the power line, the agency will shoulder an equitable share of the costs of the environmental studies."

Johansen met with U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) who supports the project. Johansen and Wyden spoke with Nucor's Chief Executive Officer John Corentti and hammered out the agreement. If Nucor decides it will not build the steel mill, the company will reimburse BPA for 100 percent of the costs incurred from this time forward. BPA will pay for the additional costs of the Environmental Impact Statement if BPA decides not to complete the transmission line project.

Johansen emphasized that this is not a decision to build the proposed transmission line. BPA is examining four alternatives, including not building a line.

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Snohomish agrees to purchase wind power beginning in September

BPA and [Snohomish Public Utility District](#) have signed a two-year power sale agreement for 10-

megawatts of certified environmentally preferred power. The Washington utility is the first in the state to sign such an agreement. The power will come from three wind-powered turbines in Wyoming and an existing small hydroelectric power plant in Idaho Falls, Idaho. Snohomish will begin receiving the power on Sept. 1, 1999, at a price reflecting the higher cost of renewable resources.

The environmentally preferred certification comes from the Bonneville Environmental Foundation, an independent nonprofit organization created in June 1998 to support renewable energy and watershed health in the Northwest. Last year, BPA agreed to market power certified by the Bonneville Environmental Foundation to utilities willing to pay an environmental premium. A portion of the premium helps support the foundation. The Snohomish power sale will provide the foundation with about \$1.2 million.

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How do El Niño and La Niña affect the weather?

In an El Niño, such as the Northwest experienced last year, the westward trade winds near the equator slacken. Warm water spreads eastward across the equatorial Pacific, causing a pool of warmer-than-normal water just off the coast of Peru and the central equatorial ocean. This warm pool strengthens the subtropical jet, which then delivers wet and cool conditions to the Southeast U.S. but generally leaves the Northwest with a mild winter and lower snowpack.

La Niña is an intense version of a normal year. Strong Pacific trade winds build a large pool of warm water in the western Pacific and leave a cold pool of water from the coast of Peru to the central Pacific. In La Niña, the warmest water moves near Australia and Indonesia, taking the subtropical jet westward with it. The result is a convergence of the polar jet and the subtropical jet near the Pacific Northwest. This gives La Niña two separate personalities for the Northwest. When the polar jet is in control, the region can get cold and snowy conditions. If the pattern shifts slightly, the subtropical jet delivers mild, wet weather. This year the polar jet was kind, providing only enough cold air to build the snowpack and a brief cold outbreak in December.

Since 1977, El Niños have dominated, and the Northwest has been generally on the dry side. But there have been two La Niñas in the last four years, and the region may be moving back into a wetter pattern where La Niñas reign. El Niño means little boy, and refers to the Christ child because it typically shows up around Christmas. La Niña means little girl.

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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Status Reports

Big Eddy-Ostrander Vegetation Management EA.

Ore. — To control vegetation on two segments of the 500- kV transmission line right-of-way. One segment is from Lolo Pass to near Parkdale. The other segment is east of Parkdale. An EA is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Columbia Wind Farm #1.

Wash. — The final EIS (#2682) is available. Call to receive a copy.

Fourmile Hill Geothermal Development Project EIS (Calpine).

Calif. — A geothermal power plant and new transmission line have been proposed on Forest Service land in the Klamath and Modoc forests. BLM has the lead. BPA is a cooperating agency. A final EIS and summary are available. Call to receive a copy.

Johnson Creek Artificial Propagation Enhancement.

Idaho — Development of a native chinook salmon broodstock for rearing of acclimated smolts to preserve and recover the population. An EA is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Mid-Columbia Coho Reintroduction Feasibility Project.

Wash.— To implement various studies and research projects on the feasibility of restoring coho salmon to the mid-Columbia tributaries. The Yakama Indian Nation and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are cooperating agencies. A preliminary EA (#1282) is available. Call to receive a copy.

Northwest Regional Power Facility.

Wash. — To construct a combustion turbine near Creston. The final EIS (#2887) and a Supplement Analysis are available. Call to receive a copy.

Reedsport-Fairview Transmission Project.

Ore. — To improve reliability and limit maintenance costs on a segment of Reedsport-Fairview No. 1, a 115-kV transmission line. Would either replace a segment of the line with a shorter line in a new location or rebuild the segment where it is now. A preliminary EA (#1286) is available. Call to receive a copy. See Close of Comment.

South Oregon Coast Reinforcement EIS.

Ore. — To reinforce electrical service to the southern Oregon coast and provide the necessary transmission for Nucor Corp. to build a new steel mill in the Coos Bay/North Bend area. The Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Corps of Engineers are cooperating agencies. A draft EIS is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Telephone Flats Geothermal Project EIS (CalEnergy).

No. Calif. — A geothermal power plant and new transmission line have been proposed on Forest Service land in the Modoc Forest. BLM has the lead and BPA is a cooperating agency. The draft EIS and summary are available. Call to receive a copy.

Vegetation Management Program EIS.

Regionwide — To develop a vegetation management program while maintaining a safe and reliable transmission system. The draft EIS is being prepared. Call to be added to the mail list.

Yakima River Basin Water Enhancement Project Programmatic EIS.

Wash. — The Bureau of Reclamation has the lead and BPA is a cooperating agency. The final programmatic EIS is available. Call Robert Black, BOR 303-445-2704 to receive a copy.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS**Electric Revolution**

March 18 and 19. Oregon Convention Center, 777 NE Martin Luther King Blvd., Portland, Ore., contact Cheri Larson, 503-230-3325.

CLOSE OF COMMENT

Reedsport-Fairview Transmission Project — March 16

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Acronyms:

EA: Environmental Assessment

EIS: Environmental Impact Statement

FONSI: Finding of No Significant Impact

NOI: Notice of Intent

ROD: Record of Decision

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<http://www.bpa.gov/Corporate/KC/home/journal/>.

We welcome all comments from you at Journal-CKC, Bonneville Power Administration, P.O. Box 3621, Portland, OR 97208-3621 or enballa@bpa.gov.

For More Information or To Get Involved:

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