



# NW Energy Coalition

April 22, 2026

**To: Bonneville Power Administration**

**Re: Interim Responses to Public Involvement Policy Update**

The NW Energy Coalition (NWECC) appreciates the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) considering updates to its Public Involvement Policy. BPA decisions have a substantial impact on the region and the public should have a meaningful opportunity to engage in those decisions. Multiple laws require it, and BPA has operated from a principle that there is a “fundamental right of all citizens to participate in the decisions of their government.”<sup>1,2</sup>

A lot has changed since 1986 when the policy was last updated. Computers, internet, and email have changed the game for public involvement. These changes require BPA to think more expansively about public involvement. Two items at the April 13, 2026, Workshop raised concerns in this regard:

**1) BPA should provide meeting recordings as a default.** One of the biggest changes since the Public Involvement Policy was adopted occurred in the last few years. The COVID-19 pandemic at the start of the decade fundamentally changed public engagement. Hybrid and virtual meetings became commonplace – and in large part, are now the norm. Given the advent of virtual meetings, it has also become commonplace for organizations to record those meetings and post them online to facilitate public engagement.

Providing meeting recordings increases public engagement by:

- Allowing members of the public who cannot make the meeting an opportunity to review what was shared and discussed at the meeting.
- Allowing members of the public the ability to be able to reference back to what was said at the meeting to better inform understanding and comments on an ongoing basis. This is particularly important given the highly technical subject matter in the BPA space.

As a result, NWECC is disappointed by BPA’s decision to not include meeting recordings as part of its Public Involvement Policy update, despite prior stakeholder requests.

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., the Northwest Power Act.

<sup>2</sup> Bonneville Power Administration. Policy for Public Involvement. 1986. <https://www.bpa.gov/-/media/Aep/public-involvement-policy/1986-bpa-policy-public-involvement.pdf>

BPA's rollout of that decision underscores exactly why this is such an important issue. There was no slide in the April 13 Workshop Presentation that documents that decision.<sup>3</sup> The only way to know that was BPA's decision is by having participated in the workshop that day (as NWECC did). Early in the meeting, BPA staff explained that although stakeholders requested meetings be recorded, BPA does not intend to adopt that requirement in this policy. At that same point, BPA also mentioned other decisions it made regarding multi-party decision-making processes and actions regarding financial commitments that were not documented in the slides.

The justification provided for not recording meetings was that it is not legally required. Here, BPA misses the point. Whether recording meetings and posting them is required or not, doing so facilitates public involvement and should be the default for BPA in this day and age.

BPA did seem to indicate that it might consider providing meeting recordings for certain processes on an ad hoc basis, but did not provide a specific plan. That leaves the public with no assurances or certainty – potentially for another 40 years given the last time the Public Involvement Policy was updated. That is an unacceptable response to a basic stakeholder request.

BPA decisionmaking processes are not the only processes stakeholders such as NWECC are trying to track and engage in at any given time. There are regularly conflicts that come up for stakeholders to attend BPA meetings.

For example, BPA's next Day-Ahead Market Readiness Workshop scheduled for June 18 conflicts with a key meeting of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. BPA's Workshop in June will be the first workshop after releasing a new Draft Decision for public comment that included major updates on BPA's next steps and garnered significant comments. The Council is currently underway with its once every five-year process to update the Power Plan, with the June meeting date being a critical time in the process before the Council finalizes the Draft Plan in July. That Power Plan will set the direction for the region and BPA resource procurement for years to come.

While the Power Council records its meetings, given the timeline and stakes of the decision it would be unfortunate for a stakeholder to have to miss. That day is also likely the day the Power Council would take public comment on anything said at the meeting as it is the last day of their multi-day meeting. This is when they typically provide an opportunity for public comment at the meeting.

BPA not recording its meeting puts a stakeholder trying to cover both items in an untenable position: Forever miss the details (beyond the slides) of what BPA has to say

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<sup>3</sup> See April, 13, 2026 Workshop slides: <https://www.bpa.gov/learn-and-participate/public-involvement-decisions/public-involvement-policy>

about its DAM efforts (a decision BPA itself has described as “momentous”<sup>4</sup>) and the stakeholder/staff discussion; or miss the opportunity to react to and provide public comment in real time to help shape the draft of the Power Plan. **These are the types of calculations and tradeoffs NWEC and other stakeholders with limited resources have to make on an ongoing basis because of BPA’s unwillingness to record its meetings. And why it is so important that BPA do so if it really is committed to public involvement.**

- 2) BPA should post comments received as a default.** BPA indicated in its slides and in discussion at the April 13 Workshop that it intends to retain discretion on whether to post comments received and will strive to provide details on whether comments will be posted each time comments are requested.<sup>5</sup> NWEC has concerns with this approach.

Posting public comments received is an important public involvement tool – particularly in this day and age when they can be easily uploaded to the website. It ensures that stakeholders can see each other’s comments. That can lead to a more robust discussion among stakeholders and potentially more trust in BPA’s process and decisionmaking.

In the past, NWEC has had to advocate to have its comments posted. Without a consistent policy in place moving forward, it means NWEC and stakeholders will need to not only address the policy issue at hand for each BPA effort, but also address the issue of whether comments will be posted (and potentially other public process components per Slide 9). That is inefficient and burdensome from a public involvement standpoint.

NWEC urges BPA to post all stakeholder comments as the default.

NWEC may have additional comments moving forward, but felt these were important to provide in this interim comment period. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Zachariah Baker  
Regional and State Policy Director

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<sup>4</sup> BPA DAM Policy Direction Cover Letter. <https://www.bpa.gov/-/media/Aep/projects/day-ahead-market/20250509-dam-policy-direction-cover-letter.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> BPA DAM Readiness Workshop. Slide 9. <https://www.bpa.gov/-/media/Aep/public-involvement-policy/20260413-public-involvement-policy-workshop.pdf>