

**COMMENTS OF THE WESTERN PUBLIC AGENCIES GROUP
REGARDING PROPOSED CHANGES TO BP-22/TC-22/EIM PHASE 3 TIMELINE**

Submitted: April 17, 2020

The utilities comprising the Western Public Agencies Group (“WPAG”) appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Bonneville Power Administration’s (“BPA”) proposal to temporarily pause the workshops for its BP-22/TC-22/EIM Phase 3 process to give BPA time to create a comprehensive straw proposal encompassing all BP-22/TC-22/EIM Phase 3 topics.

We believe the deliberate six-step process BPA has used to date has been beneficial, particularly in educating BPA’s preference customers on the Energy Imbalance Market (“EIM”). However, we also acknowledge that by its nature the six-step process has achieved piecemeal, stop-start progress in addressing certain issues where, now that the preliminary education phase is ending, BPA and its customers would benefit from a more comprehensive, integrated approach. For this reason, we are generally supportive of BPA’s proposal to temporarily suspend the workshops so it can develop an integrated proposal to be used as the basis for subsequent workshops.

We do have concerns, however, with BPA’s proposal to cancel the workshops in *both* May and June and forestalling its reengagement with the region until July 21st. Waiting until the end of July to recommence the process removes any buffer that was in the workshop schedule and will put tremendous pressure on BPA’s customers just to digest and educate themselves on BPA’s proposal, formulate responses thereto, and then articulate those responses to BPA. This will take time, and likely more than BPA or its customers currently anticipate. With the expected release of BPA’s proposed EIM Decision Document looming in October and the start of BP-22 and TC-22 cases in November, there may not be sufficient time for BPA to fully consider the input it receives from customers on its straw proposal (once they are ready) and then, most importantly, collaborate with customers to build a new better proposal for another round of feedback and collaboration before BPA settles on a final initial proposal to take into the BP-22 and TC-22 cases.

We are also concerned that the rapid fire of workshops after July will come at the cost of BPA’s regular solicitation of written comments from stakeholders. Written comments give both BPA and stakeholders the opportunity to review and weigh the positions of others. This allows them to identify potential conflicts and areas of possible collaboration. Written comments take time. Giving them their due consideration takes more time. However, they help produce a more transparent process with better reasoned and sustainable outcomes. The two-week comment periods under the current process timeline is already short. Whether the twice weekly workshops proposed under BPA’s alternative timeline for after July would even allow for meaningful written comments is, at best, uncertain.

The multitude of workshops that BPA anticipates after July will occur during the same time that many of the region’s utilities will be going through their own internal budgeting processes, which is never a small nor unimportant responsibility but will be of elevated significance this year. This may not present a problem for larger utilities who can spread the burdens of BPA’s processes and their own internal budgeting over a greater number of staff.

However, for a smaller utility that wants to participate in BPA's BP-22/TC-22/EIM Phase 3 workshops on an individual basis (in addition to its participation through its respective trade organizations), the staff that would normally do so on its behalf may also be needed in its budgeting process. The crush of workshops BPA proposes beginning in late July through October may not allow such utilities to effectively manage both, which means their individual participation and opportunity to be heard in the BPA process will likely suffer or expire. The way to address this concern, as well as the others above, is to spread the expected workshops over a longer period.

Accordingly, we join other preference customers in proposing that BPA pause the workshop schedule only for the month of May, and then resume workshops in June after BPA releases its straw proposal. We further recommend that BPA preemptively push the release of its proposed EIM Decision Document and the BP-22 and TC-22 cases each out an additional month, i.e., to November and December, respectively.¹ Collectively, this would (i) give BPA time to develop an integrated straw proposal; (ii) maintain, but delay, the same length of remaining time for BPA and customer engagement as is presently allowed for under the current schedule; (iii) provide a broader assembly of BPA's customers a meaningful opportunity to review, respond to, and collaborate on BPA's straw proposal; and, (iv) hopefully, provide the opportunity to go through the entire iterative process more than once (resulting in a better initial proposal heading into the rate and tariff cases).² To lessen the demands on BPA staff in meeting a June restart, BPA's straw proposal need not include tariff or rate schedules redlines. Those can be developed and released later in the process.

Finally, during the April 10th workshop it was mentioned that BPA has already received customer proposals on specific issues that the submitting customers want to see addressed in the BP-22 and TC-22 cases. If there is a chance that such proposals will be addressed in or incorporated into BPA's straw proposal, fundamental fairness requires that BPA's other customers be given advance notice and opportunity to comment before the release of the straw proposal. We recommend that BPA establish a comment period requesting that customers submit any proposals they would like to see addressed in the straw proposal, and that BPA then post those comments on its website for transparency purposes. Other customers would then be allowed to provide pre-straw proposal feedback to BPA through a similar transparent process.

¹ We note that BPA staff mentioned during the April 10th phone conference that delaying the start of the rate and tariff cases was a possibility if it was later determined to be necessary. For BPA's customers to better plan for their effective participation in the process, we respectfully request that BPA commit to such a delay now rather than wait until later.

² Ideally, BPA and customers will go through the cycle of proposal and customer input/collaboration more than once before BPA settles on its final initial proposal (e.g., BPA's initial straw proposal, customer input and collaboration, 1st refined BPA proposal, customer input and collaboration, 2nd refined BPA/customer proposal).