

BPA NEWS

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BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION
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Threatened chum salmon make Columbia River comeback

Portland, Ore.- Northwest biologists are closely monitoring chum salmon this winter as they record what might be the largest run of Columbia River chum in 13 years. The 2015 run could be as high as 20,000, making it the largest since 2002.

The annual run of Columbia River chum salmon historically numbered more than 1 million. However, habitat loss and other factors caused their numbers to plummet during the last century to a low of just a few thousand per year. The federal government listed Columbia River chum as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 1999.

Called “dog” salmon because of their canine-like teeth, chum are the last salmon of the year to return to the Columbia to spawn, and their young are the first to leave for the ocean in the spring. Chum salmon generally spawn in the lower part of the Columbia River below Bonneville Dam, preferring tributaries where warm ground water pushes up through spawning gravel. The warm water quickly incubates their eggs.

The Bonneville Power Administration has funded two hatchery programs and construction of new spawning habitat for chum in several areas of the lower Columbia River. In 2011, BPA increased the capacity of two chum salmon spawning channels located on tributaries just below Bonneville Dam.

BPA, along with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and other federal partners, manages river flows from Bonneville Dam to keep chum salmon redds (or nests of eggs) under water during critical times of the year. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife is also building a new spawning channel for chum salmon on the Lewis River. It should be completed by summer 2016.

Check out NOAA’s [Lower Columbia River Recovery Plan for Salmon and Steelhead](#).

Video of chum spawning in a Lower Columbia River channel is also available.



About BPA

The Bonneville Power Administration, headquartered in Portland, Ore., is a nonprofit federal power marketer that sells wholesale electricity from 31 federal dams and one nuclear plant to 142 Northwest electric utilities, serving millions of consumers and businesses in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, western Montana and parts of California, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming. BPA delivers power via more than 15,000 circuit miles of lines and 259 substations to 490 transmission customers. In all, BPA markets about a third of the electricity consumed in the Northwest and operates three-quarters of the region's high-voltage transmission grid. BPA also funds one of the largest fish and wildlife programs in the world, and, with its partners, pursues cost-effective energy savings and operational solutions that help maintain affordable, reliable and carbon-free electric power for the Northwest. www.bpa.gov

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