

# BPA NEWS

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BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION  
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CONTACT: Sarah Burczak, 503-230-3264  
503-230-5131

## **BPA expecting normal water year operations**

**Portland, Ore.** – The Bonneville Power Administration is looking at a normal water year after implementing dry-year operations in 2015. Record-setting precipitation in December and a wet March have helped boost this year’s water supply forecast.

The April 19 water supply forecast for January through July is 105.7 million acre-feet, or 104 percent of normal. The report is produced by the Northwest River Forecast Center, based on water volume measured at The Dalles Dam.

“One major difference we see this year is a more normal and evenly distributed snowpack in the Columbia Basin compared to last year,” said Erik Pytlak, manager of the Weather and Streamflow Forecasting group in BPA Power Services. “Snowpack is what feeds the system’s spring and summer runoff, so it’s important to BPA to have good snowpack by this time of year.”

With the approaching runoff, there’s a chance BPA might need to use its oversupply management protocol this year should oversupply conditions arise. This protocol was last used in 2012. Oversupply occurs when a rare combination of factors comes together: low energy demand; an abundance of water; high hydroelectric generation; and operational limitations on the amount of water that can be spilled, or passed through the dams, to protect fish.

The oversupply protocol can be triggered any time of year, but is most likely during spring runoff, even in an average water year. BPA recently received approval from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to use the OMP indefinitely, although BPA must still file the rate with FERC every two years. The protocol places the associated costs largely on the participating customers.

The El Niño weather pattern that the region has been experiencing since March 2015 is finally weakening, but because it was so strong, the region can expect the effects to linger for a few more months.

“El Niño events typically tilt toward warmer and drier conditions in the Pacific Northwest,” said Pytlak. “However, strong events like we had this past winter can bring significant precipitation to the region and result in a healthy snowpack. That has indeed played out so far this year.”

It has also been a rather warm winter, not only in the Pacific Northwest but across the United States. The warmer weather has been linked to lower demand for natural gas and this year’s decline in natural gas prices. These lower prices have driven down the price of BPA’s surplus power in the electricity market. That has reduced BPA’s surplus power sales outlook this year. Surplus power sales are used to keep BPA rates lower than they would have been otherwise.

On the bright side, the amount of water in Columbia River Treaty storage dams, including those in Canada, is recovering from the additional water releases made last spring and summer to offset low streamflow conditions.

“Using current forecasts, there is a good chance of refilling the composite Canadian Treaty content to near normal levels by the end of the operating year, which was much lower than normal last year due to the dry conditions in the U.S.,” said Trevor Downen, Canadian Treaty operations lead in Power Services’ Operations Planning group.

## **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 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 261 substations to 475 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](http://www.bpa.gov)*

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