



BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION
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Clean air, affordable power and environmental mitigation: Northwest Power Act turns 40

Four decades ago, legislators and policymakers in the Pacific Northwest took a revolutionary leap of faith. They worked to end the construction of expensive and environmentally intrusive power plants and instead prioritized meeting much of the region's future power demand through more efficient energy use. And for the first time, fish and wildlife affected by Columbia River Basin hydropower dams were to be protected in a manner that provides equitable treatment with the other purposes of the dams.

The Northwest Power Act of 1980 authorized a partnership among the Bonneville Power Administration, other federal agencies, and the four Northwest states through a new interstate compact today called the Northwest Power and Conservation Council. The Act directed the Council to create a plan to assure the Northwest an adequate, efficient, economical and reliable power supply while also mitigating the adverse effects of hydropower dams on fish and wildlife in the Columbia River Basin.

The Act recognized that energy efficiency is the least expensive and cleanest way to meet growing electricity needs. To date, efforts outlined in the Act — signed into law by President Jimmy Carter 40 years ago this month — helped improve the efficiency of electricity use by approximately 7,000 average megawatts so far. That's practically the same as the average annual output of the Federal Columbia River Power System — a "virtual river" of efficiency roughly equal to the annual power consumption of five cities the size of Seattle, or enough to serve more than 5 million Northwest homes.

In addition, improvements in power-use efficiency have avoided carbon emissions that would have resulted if an equivalent amount of electricity had been generated using fossil fuels, and this helps reduce the impacts of climate change. By reducing carbon dioxide and other gases produced by burning fossil fuels in power plants, the air we breathe is cleaner.

“The Bonneville Power Administration, its public utility customers and other partners have an extraordinary legacy of saving energy to meet customer needs and keeping power rates low,” said BPA acting Administrator John Hairston. “The region is blessed with a low-carbon federal system that energy efficiency and conservation have allowed us to stretch over time, and it continues to meet customer needs today.”

“While the Northwest Power Act isn’t perfect, I think we can all agree that it is a remarkable, if not landmark, piece of environmental legislation,” Council Chair Richard Devlin said. “There is nothing like it anywhere else in the United States, and other parts of the country are envious of the benefits and results that it has bestowed on our region.”

The regional power plan created by the Council is not just about assuring an adequate, efficient and affordable power supply, it also includes a program to protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife affected by hydropower dams in the Columbia River Basin, our region’s largest supply of electricity. The Council establishes the program and recommends implementation actions to BPA, which funds the program. The Council, working with BPA and the region’s fish and wildlife agencies, tribes and interested citizens, revises the power plan and fish and wildlife program at least every five years.

BPA, in coordination with the Council, has invested approximately \$4.6 billion on these efforts since passage of the Act. BPA and its partners have acquired or restored hundreds of thousands of acres of fish and wildlife habitat and built or improved numerous fish hatcheries to improve conditions for the many species of fish and wildlife affected by the FCRPS.

While the benefits of the fish and wildlife program are evident, perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the Act is one we don’t see as much as we experience: Energy efficiency makes our homes and buildings more comfortable, lowers electricity bills, and “stretches” the low-cost hydropower system by reducing our reliance on fossil fuels to generate power, thus helping keep our power supply clean and affordable. The Act established one of the boldest and most forward-thinking energy efficiency programs in the nation. This was always the intention of those who wrote the Act, such as Oregon Senator Mark Hatfield who was responsible for its energy efficiency requirements.

“Three million residences, 400,000 commercial establishments and 10,000 industrial plants are going to supply conservation... We must make things happen,” Hatfield said at the time.

Today, the work of improving energy efficiency continues. The Council estimates the region is poised to save an additional 4,400 megawatts by 2035, which will prevent the region from releasing almost 18 million tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. These extra savings and environmental benefits will be important as more than 1,000 megawatts of coal-fired power generation are retired in the Northwest over the next decade or so. Energy efficiency will also

play a vital role in assuring that the region's future power supply remains adequate, efficient, economical and reliable.

Visit bpa.gov for information on BPA's Energy Efficiency Program. In addition, BPA will be sharing more facts and perspectives on fish and wildlife in commemoration of the 40th anniversary in the future. Click the links to learn more about the [Northwest Power Act](#) and [the Northwest Power and Conservation Council](#).