

Millions of Columbia River salmon return home in 2015

The Columbia Basin's 2015 salmon season ended with a remarkable 2.3 million adult salmon passing Bonneville Dam on their up-river migration. Overall, this makes 2015 the second-strongest year for Columbia River salmon since the federal government built dams on the river nearly 80 years ago.

"We have a lot to be thankful for in the Columbia Basin," said Paul Lumley, executive director of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. "This only highlights what we can accomplish as a region. Yes, there is more work to be done to address things like climate change, water quality and water temperatures, but this success provides the confidence to achieve full salmon recovery."

Approximately 954,000 fall chinook salmon made up roughly half of the 2015 run and represented the largest fall chinook return ever recorded on the Columbia, edging out the 2013 record.

Threatened Snake River fall chinook also returned in impressive numbers. Nearly 60,000 fish returned to the Snake River, the second-largest return since major dams were built on the lower Snake. In addition, approximately 20,000 wild Snake River fall chinook crossed Lower Granite Dam to spawn naturally upstream in the river's mainstem and large tributaries.

"When you look at how well salmon did overall this year, it's clear the approach of restoring critical fish habitat and improving dam passage is working," says Lorri Bodi, vice president of Environment, Fish and Wildlife at the Bonneville Power Administration. "This is a direct example of partnerships with Northwest tribes, states, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council and the federal government — working together to bring more fish back to the rivers."

Not all Northwest fish runs fared well in 2015. Several weeks of unseasonable temperatures heated river water decimating this year's run of endangered Snake River sockeye salmon, despite efforts to save them. Approximately 4,000 of the endangered salmon had passed Bonneville Dam on their way upstream, the most ever counted at Bonneville since federal recovery efforts for this run began in the 1990s.

Thankfully, conservation hatcheries established to preserve and rebuild endangered sockeye numbers served their purpose of safeguarding the genetic heritage of the species. In addition, biologists released 600 hatchery sockeye into Idaho's Redfish and Pettit lakes to spawn naturally. Research shows offspring of sockeye that spawned naturally in the lakes return at higher rates than those released from hatcheries.

Overall, the cumulative 2015 run of Columbia River salmon is one of the largest in almost eight decades, allowing anglers to catch approximately 600,000 fish.

"Federal agencies, tribes, states and other Northwest parties can be thankful that their collective efforts, in combination with strong ocean conditions, is supporting impressive numbers of returning salmon," said Michael Tehan, NOAA Fisheries' assistant regional administrator for the agency's Interior Columbia Basin Office. "That's something every citizen in our region can celebrate."

BPA employees help rescue bear cub in Shelton

The morning of Oct. 19 started off a bit unusually for employees at the Bonneville Power Administration's Shelton Substation, about 20 miles northwest of Olympia, Wash. A young bear cub was in the vicinity and when county sheriff's department staff went to capture the cub, it was so frightened that he jumped the substation fence and perched atop energized high-voltage electrical equipment.

"We saw the little guy on our security cameras and were getting really nervous as he strolled through an area charged with 230,000 volts of electricity," said Joel Myer, spokesman for Mason County Public Utility District No. 3, the local utility served by the BPA substation.

Quick-thinking substation operator Bob Armanino contacted BPA's control center in Vancouver, Wash., which promptly de-energized the 230-kilovolt equipment, saving the bear's life.

"Quick action by Bob and the dispatch center not only saved the bear's life, but prevented the potential for a great





A bear cub, affectionately named Sparky, took refuge in BPA's Shelton Substation, about 20 miles northwest of Olympia, Wash. Sparky was rescued and taken to the Idaho Black Bear Rehab near Boise. (Bottom photo courtesy of Idaho Black Bear Rehab)

deal of damage to the equipment,” said Chief Substation Operator Kevin Yowell.

The story doesn't end there. The frightened bear cub then climbed to the top of a pole and jumped into a nearby tree. No amount of coaxing by four sheriff's deputies and members of BPA's electrician crew would make the bear come down. He ended up spending the night high above the substation at the very top of the tree.

The next day, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife staff, who know a thing or two about bears, set a trap complete with donuts as bait. The cub eventually succumbed to temptation and was soon captured.

“I've worked in and around substations for many years, and this is a first for me,” Yowell said. “I guess the taste of a fresh Krispy Kreme was undeniably strong for the little guy.”

About a week later, the roughly 40-pound bear cub, affectionately named Sparky by the staff at Mason County PUD 3, was one of three cubs taken to Idaho Black Bear Rehab near Boise. IBBR reports that Sparky is at a good weight now, his coat is in excellent condition and he's socializing well with other bears.



Greg Delwiche, BPA Deputy Administrator, received the Presidential Rank Award in Washington D.C. on Dec. 15, 2015.

Deputy Administrator Greg Delwiche receives Presidential Rank Award

BPA Deputy Administrator Greg Delwiche was selected by President Barack Obama to receive a Presidential Rank Award on Dec. 15 in Washington, D.C. Only 1 percent of Senior Executive Service employees can earn the award in Delwiche's category for Distinguished Executive.

Delwiche was recognized for his more than 15 years as an executive where he played

an integral role in issues of regional and international significance, including the Columbia River Treaty review, the \$1 billion Columbia Basin Fish Accords, implementing BPA's 20-year power sales contracts with its 142 utility customers and the Department of Energy's nearly \$800 million uranium tails agreement with BPA partner Energy Northwest.

“I was speechless,” says Delwiche of his reaction to the news. “More than anything else, this award speaks to what BPA is all about and the opportunity for employees to address critically important challenges and opportunities that are vital for enhancing the long-term value of the Columbia River power system and the natural environment within which the power system exists.”

His approachability, honesty and transparency in decision-making have contributed to positive and productive outcomes for BPA's customers, stakeholders and staff.

“Through it all, Greg has also devoted time and personal attention to mentoring and developing employees across BPA, and fostering an environment of trust, cooperation and teamwork,” says Administrator Elliot Mainzer.

Delwiche will retire in January after 32 years of federal service, which he started at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers before coming to BPA in 1992. After starting as a manager in Power Operations Planning, he has served as vice president of Generation Supply, vice president of Environment, Fish and Wildlife and senior vice president of Power Services. He holds undergraduate and graduate civil engineering degrees from the University of Florida and Oregon State University, respectively.

BPA PROJECTS

Focus 2028 [Regionwide]

BPA is hosting its next round of Focus 2028 discussions in February 2016. BPA accepted comments about future Focus 2028 discussion topics through Dec. 9, 2015. The topics identified to date include financial health metrics and policies; cost management practices; performance-based environmental stewardship; optimizing BPA's energy efficiency program design; long-term approach to federal hydropower system stewardship and finding balance in transmission business and builds. Topics may be added or modified as BPA staff review comments and ideas that were received. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/goto/Focus2028.

Power

Alcoa remand public process [Regionwide]

BPA accepted public input and comment to assist in its response to the decision issued Sept. 18, 2014, by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. The ruling in *Industrial Customers of Northwest Utilities, et al. v. Bonneville Power Administration* related to BPA's contracts with its direct-service industry customers. In its decision, the court instructed BPA to address four specific questions regarding service to Alcoa and the recovery of funds. BPA issued a draft record of decision on Sept. 4, 2015 and accepted comments through Oct. 9, 2015. Comments received will assist BPA in its decision-making before issuing a final record of decision on Jan. 11, 2016. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/power/pl/regionaldialogue/implementation/Documents/DSI.SHTML.

Frequency Response Reserves [Regionwide]

BPA intends to offer a new frequency response reserves product in accordance with public preference and Northwest preference to balancing authorities. Balancing authorities in the Northwest will have a first right to purchase the product, which may be offered extra-regionally if there is additional capacity available and insufficient demand in the Northwest. Public comments were accepted through Nov. 13, 2015. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/power/psb/dailyoffer/daily.shtml.

Cost verification for fiscal year 2015 Slice true-up adjustment charge [Regionwide]

BPA accepted comments through Dec. 10, 2015 on the composite cost pool true-up table and the slice true-up adjustment, which reflects the pertinent actual expenses and revenue credits for fiscal year 2015. One set of questions was submitted in this first comment period. BPA posted its response to the Slice customer group's letter on the cost verification website. Customers may comment on BPA's response through Jan. 5, 2016. BPA will consider the identification of any Slice true-up adjustment issues for inclusion in the agreed-upon procedures, which are miscellaneous financial services provided contractually to BPA by an external auditor. As of Dec. 18, 2015, BPA has concluded that the questions submitted earlier do not qualify for AUP listing, so there is no draft AUP listing. The FY 2015 composite cost pool savings, when compared to the rate case forecast, is \$144.7 million. As a result, the FY 2015 Slice true-up adjustment that is applicable to Slice customers is a credit of \$40.4 million. The remainder of the cost verification process schedule will be set after customer comments, if any, are received by Jan. 5, 2016. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/goto/costverification.

Proposed Momentum Savings Baseline Alignment Library [Regionwide]

BPA is seeking feedback on its proposal to scope and implement a baseline alignment library. This library would provide an optional resource for utilities that conduct Conservation Potential Assessments. Without alignment on baselines, BPA cannot accurately report Momentum savings to utilities. Baseline alignment also impacts Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance and program savings. BPA is seeking feedback on the proposal and approach through Jan. 27, 2016. Comments will be considered as BPA makes a final decision, and BPA will respond to comments thematically in a letter to the region. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/goto/BaselineLibrary.

Transmission

Midway-Moxee Rebuild and Midway-Grandview Upgrade Transmission Line Project [Benton and Yakima counties, Wash.]

BPA accepted comments on a draft environmental assessment for the proposed Midway-Moxee Rebuild and Midway-Grandview Upgrade project through Oct. 9. The 115-kV lines, which are deteriorating due to age and exposure to weather, need to be rebuilt to ensure reliable electric service. The Bureau of Land Management is a cooperating agency with BPA for the environmental assessment. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/goto/MidMoxGrand.

I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project [Cowlitz, Clark counties, Wash.; Multnomah County, Ore.]

BPA expects to release a final environmental impact statement in early 2016. The final EIS does not represent or include a decision concerning whether to build the proposed I-5 Corridor Reinforcement Project. Before BPA makes any such decision, it is further reviewing the cost and rate implications of the project. BPA is also continuing to explore potential options that would not involve building the line — referred to as non-wire measures — to see if there are any feasible and cost-effective options that could defer the need for the project, either in the long term or indefinitely. BPA expects to make a decision about the project by the end of 2016. If BPA decides to build the project, it would then focus on negotiating acquisition of the required easements from property owners and obtaining permits. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/goto/i5.

Lane-Wendson Transmission Line Rebuild Project [Lane County, Ore.]

BPA proposes to rebuild the 41.3-mile Lane-Wendson No. 1 115-kV wood-pole transmission line between Eugene and Florence, Ore. The project is necessary due to the age and condition of the line. BPA's intent is to rebuild the lines using generally the same structure locations and similar pole heights, except where changes may be needed to conform with safety standards. Improvements would involve replacing all wood-pole structures (including poles, cross arms, cross braces, guys, anchors and insulator assemblies); replacing conductors and ground wires; replacing 5 disconnect switches; and improving access roads. BPA is accepting comments through Jan. 4, 2016. If BPA decides to proceed with the project, construction would begin in the summer of 2016. For more information, go to efw.bpa.gov/environmental_services/Document_Library/Lane-Wendson/.

Public Involvement continued [Updates & Notices]

Environment, Fish and Wildlife

Melvin R. Sampson Hatchery, Yakima Basin Coho Project [Kittitas County, Wash.]

BPA initiated scoping on a proposal to fund the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation to build and operate a hatchery near Ellensburg, Wash. The hatchery would rear coho salmon for harvest and to aid in natural spawning. The coho salmon would be released into the tributaries and mainstem reaches of the Yakima and Naches rivers. The Notice of Availability initiating scoping was published in the Federal Register on Nov. 16, 2015. BPA hosted a public meeting in Ellensburg, Wash., on Dec. 9, 2015. The scoping period will end on Jan. 4, 2016. For more information, contact Dave Goodman at 503-230-4764.

Steigerwald Floodplain Restoration Project [Clark County, Wash.]

BPA is proposing to fund the Steigerwald Floodplain Restoration Project, a project proposed by Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership and located on the Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge in Clark County, Wash. The project would reconnect Gibbons Creek to the Columbia River and is intended to improve water quality and habitat to benefit steelhead and cutthroat trout; chinook, coho and chum salmon; and Pacific and western brook lamprey. BPA initiated scoping in December and comments will be accepted through Jan. 27, 2016. BPA will host a public meeting in Washougal, Wash. on Jan. 14, where project information, maps, and project team members will be available. For more information, contact Dave Goodman at 503-230-4764.

Bird Track Springs Restoration Project [Union County, Ore.]

BPA is proposing to fund the Birdtrack Springs Restoration Project, which is located within the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest and adjacent to private lands in the upper Grande Ronde River, Ore. The project is a partnership between BPA, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Reclamation. The project will benefit Endangered Species Act-listed Pacific salmonids and their habitat by excavating channel meanders, removing artificial constraints, increasing off-channel connectivity and increasing instream complexity through placement of large wood structures. Initial project scoping is expected to begin in mid-February 2016.

Eightmile Ranch Coho Acclimation Site [Okanogan County, Wash.]

BPA and the U.S. Forest Service plan to release the final environmental assessment for the Eightmile Ranch Coho Acclimation Site in January or February 2016. Additionally, the Forest Service plans to release its draft decision notice for the project at the same time. Release of these documents will begin a 45 day public objection period. Tentatively, the Forest Service plans to issue its final decision notice and special use permit, if warranted, in early to mid-2016. BPA plans to release its finding of no significant impact, or FONSI, if warranted, within one to two weeks after the Forest Service issues the special use permit. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/goto/Eightmile.

CLOSE OF COMMENT

- **Jan. 4**, Melvin R. Sampson Hatchery, Yakima Basin Coho Project
- **Jan. 4**, Lane-Wendson Transmission Line Rebuild Project
- **Jan. 5**, Cost verification process for FY 2015 Slice true-up adjustment charge
- **Jan. 27**, Proposed Momentum Savings Baseline Alignment Library
- **Jan. 27**, Steigerwald Floodplain Restoration Project

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For current meeting information, go to www.bpa.gov/PublicInvolvement/Cal.

Steigerwald Floodplain Restoration Project Scoping

- **Jan. 14**, TBD
Washougal, Wash.

Quarterly Business Review

- **Feb. 2**, TBD
BPA Rates Hearing Room
1201 Lloyd Blvd., Suite 200, Portland, Ore

Focus 2028 February Forum

- **Feb. 10**, 1 to 5 p.m.
- **Feb. 11**, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Feb. 12**, 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

BPA Rates Hearing Room 1201 Lloyd Blvd., Suite 200, Portland, Ore.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Information on other projects under environmental review is available at www.bpa.gov/goto/NEPA.

For information about the National Environmental Policy Act in general, go to www.bpa.gov/goto/environmentalplanning.

The Journal is a monthly publication of the Bonneville Power Administration. If you have questions or comments, or you want to be added to the mailing list for any project, call toll free 800-622-4519.

To order copies of documents, call: 800-622-4520 or 503-230-7334. Written comments may be sent to: BPA, P.O. Box 14428, Portland, OR 97293-4428. Email address: comment@bpa.gov. BPA home page: www.bpa.gov. For details on BPA environmental reviews listed above, including site maps and documents issued to date, see www.efw.bpa.gov/environmental_services/nepadocs.aspx. Process Abbreviations: EA-Environmental Assessment, EIS-Environmental Impact Statement, ESA-Endangered Species Act, FONSI-Finding of No Significant Impact, NOI-Notice of Intent, ROD-Record of Decision.

