



Journal

May 2016



Keeping the lights on: It's what they do.

More than 2,000 years ago, the Greek historian Herodotus penned the popular phrase “Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night” that has been attributed in modern times to the Postal Service. But I can think of no greater tribute or apt description of a Bonneville Power Administration lineman.

On a moment's notice, regardless of the conditions or hour of the day or night, these highly skilled trade workers care for the more than 15,000 miles of transmission lines in BPA's system that span snow-capped mountains, sparse deserts and densely populated cities. We entrust our linemen to maintain, replace, repair and patrol every mile, ensuring our clean, low-cost power gets to millions of consumers across the Northwest.

And they do so safely.

They are often the face of Bonneville, interacting with land-owners and the public, even as they work to keep our customers in service. And when our customers are without service, they are the tip of the spear, working to restore power and, by extension, the normal conditions of our modern life.

They are experts in electrical trade theory, rigging techniques and safety. But more, they are also jacks-of-all-trades, who must possess good working knowledge of everything from surveying to carpentry and heavy equipment operations to mathematics.

We have 17 line crews operating across our territory. But considering the size of that territory, the number of line workers at Bonneville Power is astonishingly small — around 100. That's a great deal of responsibility shouldered by a relatively small team.

Of course, these line crews don't accomplish the task alone — they work side-by-side with our electricians, substation operators, SPC and PSC craftsmen, equipment operators, riggers and other critical field staff to keep our transmission system running reliably.

In April, we celebrate our linemen and all of the qualified electrical workers who are responsible for keeping the lights on.

To all of our linemen and other trades workers on the front lines, you have my utmost respect and appreciation. Your incredibly important jobs are the perfect example of all of our core values at work — safety, operational excellence, trustworthy stewardship and collaborative relationships. And you directly support each of our agency priorities — Our People; Physical Assets; Reliable, Efficient & Flexible Operations; Sustainable Finances & Rates; and The Natural Environment.

So, should you see one of Bonneville's linemen or electrical workers, do me a favor. Thank them for keeping the lights on. It's what they do.

Elliot Mainzer
Administrator and CEO

BPA expecting normal water year operations

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 without generating power, 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.

EPRI, Seattle City Light, BPA host workshop to boost server-room efficiency

With racks of computer equipment operating 24/7, server rooms consume a considerable amount of electricity. Their cooling systems often use more energy than the servers themselves.

“Server rooms can account for more than half the electricity used in a commercial building,” said Ted Brown, senior energy management analyst at Seattle City Light. “So efficiency improvements can result in significant energy savings and airflow management can reduce a building’s energy use by 5 to 10 percent.”

On March 10, Seattle City Light, the Electric Power Research Institute and the Bonneville Power Administration held a workshop at the Museum of Flight in Seattle to discuss energy efficiency opportunities for server rooms with a focus on flow management. More than 50 people attended from regional electric utilities, server-room operators and industry players.

“We discussed operating challenges and national experts shared insights into best practices for airflow management,” said Michael Jones, Seattle City Light’s power supply and environmental affairs officer.

Presenters also shared tools to build a business case for energy efficiency solutions. A panel of server-room owners discussed the impact and success of airflow management projects, and utility representatives discussed energy efficiency incentive programs.

“This was a great opportunity to educate a hard-to-reach market about efficient cooling systems and other energy-saving opportunities EPRI, Seattle City Light and BPA have explored,” said Mira Vowles, a BPA energy efficiency engineer.

Trimming server-room energy use is a notable part of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council’s Seventh Power Plan. The plan, which is developed to ensure that the region will have a reliable and economical power supply in the future, calls for 261 average megawatts of server-room energy efficiency by 2035.

BPA is expecting to hold a similar workshop for its east-side customer utilities in May.

Public Involvement [Updates & Notices]

Financial reserves policy [Regionwide]

BPA is developing a financial reserves policy. It will address the target level of reserves, how the Treasury note is used for rate-making purposes, and what actions, if any, should be taken when reserves are above or below target levels. The first workshop was held on March 29, with upcoming workshops on May 10 and June 7. For information, go to www.bpa.gov/Finance/FinancialPublicProcesses/Pages/Access-to-Capital.aspx.

Rate Period High Water Mark public process [Regionwide]

BPA is beginning the process for establishing Rate Period High Water Marks that will be used to set power rates for fiscal years 2018 and 2019. The RHWM is the amount of energy a customer is eligible to purchase at BPA's lowest-cost Tier 1 rates in the upcoming rate period. BPA will share preliminary RHWM calculations and gather input from customers on May 10. Staff will discuss the inputs to the RHWM calculations, including customer load forecasts, the Tier 1 System Firm Critical Output and RHWM augmentation amounts. For information, go to www.bpa.gov/Finance/RateCases/BP-18/Pages/Rate-Period-High-Water-Mark-Process.aspx.

BP-18 Rate Case workshops [Regionwide]

BPA will hold a series of workshops in preparation for the BP-18 rate proceeding to set power, transmission and ancillary services rates for fiscal years 2018–2019. The kickoff workshop was held on April 20. For information, go to www.bpa.gov/goto/ratecase.

POWER

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

BPA posted a summary of agreed upon procedures to be completed by an external auditor. The work commenced in March. The fiscal year 2015 composite cost pool savings, when compared to the rate case forecast, is \$144.7 million. As a result, the fiscal year 2015 Slice true-up adjustment that is applicable to Slice customers is a credit of \$40.4 million. 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 create a baseline alignment library. Without alignment on baselines, BPA cannot accurately report “momentum” savings to utilities. Baseline alignment also affects Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance and program savings. BPA sought feedback on the proposal and approach through Jan. 27, 2016. Comments will be considered as BPA makes a final decision, and the agency will respond to them 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 released a final environmental assessment in March and decided to rebuild the two transmission lines and upgrade the Midway-

Grandview transmission line. The final environmental assessment addresses comments received on the draft environmental assessment. Construction is expected to begin in September. The Bureau of Land Management is a cooperating agency with BPA for the environmental assessment. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/efw/Analysis/NEPADocuments/Pages/Midway-Moxee.aspx.

Hills Creek-Lookout Point Transmission Line Rebuild Project [Lane County, Ore.]

BPA proposes to rebuild the 26-mile Hills Creek-Lookout Point 115-kV wood-pole transmission line between the cities of Oakridge and Lowell, Ore. Improvements would involve replacing all wood-pole structures (including poles and other hardware), replacing conductors and ground wires, realigning the line to avoid a rock fall and landslide, and improving access roads. BPA expects to publish the draft environmental assessment for comment in 2016. The U.S. Forest Service is a cooperating agency with BPA for the EA. If BPA decides to proceed with the project, construction would begin in the summer of 2018. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/efw/Analysis/NEPADocuments/Pages/Hills-Creek-Lookout-Point.aspx.

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

BPA proposes to rebuild the 41-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 line using the same general structure locations and pole heights, except where changes may be needed to conform to 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 five disconnect switches; and improving access roads. BPA is preparing a final environmental assessment and a finding of no significant impact, to be released in spring 2016. If BPA decides to proceed with the project, construction would begin this summer. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/efw/Analysis/NEPADocuments/Pages/Lane-Wendson.aspx.

ENVIRONMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE

Columbia Estuary Ecosystem Restoration Program [Oregon and Washington]

BPA, along with the Portland District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is planning to issue a draft programmatic environmental assessment evaluating the Columbia Estuary Ecosystem Restoration Program. The program was jointly instituted by BPA and the Corps to undertake the activities necessary to evaluate, protect, monitor and restore fish and wildlife habitat in the lower Columbia River and estuary. The draft was released in April. BPA and the Corps are seeking comments through May 16. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/efw/Analysis/NEPADocuments/Pages/EstuaryRestorationProgram.aspx.

Kerry Island Restoration Project [Columbia County, Ore.]

BPA is proposing to fund the Kerry Island Restoration Project, proposed by the Columbia Land Trust and located along Westport Slough about a mile east of the town of Westport, Ore. The project would benefit Endangered Species Act-listed Pacific salmonids and their habitat by removing a levee surrounding the island, restoring a

Public Involvement continued [Updates & Notices]

tidal channel network and restoring tidal wetlands and floodplain connectivity. A public comment period closed on April 4. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/efw/Analysis/NEPADocuments/Pages/KerryIslandEstuaryRestoration.aspx.

Lower Elochoman Restoration Project [Wahkiakum County, Wash.]

BPA is proposing to fund the Lower Elochoman Restoration Project, recommended by the Columbia Land Trust. The project, located along the Lower Elochoman River about two miles north of the town of Cathlamet, Wash., would benefit Endangered Species Act-listed Pacific salmonids and their habitat by removing a levee along the Lower Elochoman River and restoring wetlands and floodplain connectivity. An initial scoping comment period closed April 4. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/efw/Analysis/NEPADocuments/Pages/LowerElochomanEstuary.aspx.

Wallacut River Confluence Restoration Project [Pacific County, Wash.]

BPA is proposing to fund the Wallacut River Confluence Restoration Project, recommended by the Columbia Land Trust, along the Wallacut River at its confluence with the Columbia River about 1.5 miles northeast of the town of Ilwaco, Wash. The project would benefit Endangered Species Act-listed Pacific salmonids and their habitat by removing a levee along the Wallacut River, restoring a tidal channel network, restoring tidal wetlands and floodplain connectivity. An initial project scoping comment period closed on April 4. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/efw/Analysis/NEPADocuments/Pages/WallacutRiverConfluenceEstuary.aspx.

Middle Entiat River Restoration Project [Chelan County, Wash.]

BPA is proposing to provide funding for the Middle Entiat River Habitat Restoration Project along a 4-mile section of the Entiat River, in Chelan County, Wash. The goal of the proposed project is to re-establish natural riverine processes and a properly functioning and self-sustaining riverine floodplain ecosystem that would provide critical spawning, rearing and off-channel refuge habitat for native fish and floodplain-associated wildlife in the Entiat River Basin. Target species would be steelhead, bull trout and other resident fish. Scoping was initiated on Feb. 1, 2016, and comments were accepted through Mar. 1, 2016. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/efw/Analysis/NEPADocuments/Pages/MiddleEntiatRiverHabitat.aspx.

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

BPA and the U.S. Forest Service released the final environmental assessment for the Eightmile Ranch Coho Acclimation Site in March. BPA plans to release its finding of no significant impact, or FONSI, if warranted, in May or June. For more information, go to www.bpa.gov/goto/Eightmile.

CLOSE OF COMMENT

- **May 16**, Columbia Estuary Ecosystem Restoration Program
- **May 26**, Rate Period High Water Mark process

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

Quarterly Business Review

- **May 3**, 9:30 a.m. to noon
BPA rates hearing room, 1201 Lloyd Blvd., Suite 200, Portland, Ore.

Financial Reserves Policy Workshop

- **May 10**, 9 a.m. to noon
BPA rates hearing room, 1201 Lloyd Blvd., Suite 200, Portland, Ore.

RHWM Process Workshop

- **May 10**, 1 to 4 p.m.
BPA rates hearing room, 1201 Lloyd Blvd., Suite 200, Portland, Ore.

BP-18 Generation Inputs Workshop

- **May 24**, 9 a.m. to noon
BPA rates hearing room, 1201 Lloyd Blvd., Suite 200, Portland, Ore.

Financial Reserves Policy

- **June 7**, 1 to 4 p.m.
BPA rates hearing room, 1201 Lloyd Blvd., Suite 200, Portland, Ore.

BP-18 Transmission Rates Workshop

- **June 8**, 9 a.m. to noon
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/efw/Analysis/NEPADocuments/Pages/References.aspx.

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.

