



## Heads Up on Fish and Wildlife

PNUCC - June 2008

The Northwest Power and Conservation Council has worked through an initial review of proposals to amend its Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife program. With dozens of reactions to those proposals in hand, the Council will start considering how to treat the recommendations.

- ♣ Thanks to you, the Council will have plenty of input from the power community when it starts deliberations. Utilities and trade groups responded mightily to the call to support our recommendations. We counted over 30 letters on the Council's website that reinforce our message and let the Council know that those footing the bill want a program that sticks to the purposes set out by Congress and lays out thoughtful guidance, rather than prescriptive measures. Because you have weighed in, the Council will have a perspective that's been overlooked in the past.
- ♣ The Council is contemplating the idea of "high-level indicators" to tell if its fish and wildlife program is succeeding. These indicators are divided into two categories, biological and implementation. So far we're encouraged at anything that speaks to accountability in the program. On the other hand, we're a bit cautious with our endorsement since the indicators are quite broad. If they become part of the program, we want it to be clear that many items, like harvest, are not the hydro system's responsibility. There's an opportunity to comment on the indicators through July 11; look on the PNUCC website, <http://www.pnucc.org/CouncilFWProgram.htm> for a copy of Councilmember Karier's presentation to the Council explaining the concept.
- ♣ Over the next month, we expect early decisions about program scope and framework, and how to blend the program with other federal commitments to fish and wildlife mitigation. We have urged the Council to refer to the multiple biological opinions and other agreements with tribes and states and to keep the project specific detail to a minimum. We're also urging that kind of treatment for the subbasin plans. These locally prepared documents address many impacts that don't relate to mitigating for the hydro system. While there are lots of interests that want the plans kept in the program to be eligible for BPA funding, we'll continue the push to remedy that.

The draft F&W program will be taking shape this summer, and August is still the target for a completed draft. We'll see what kind of headway we can make on the issues and keep you posted.

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