

# Update

## What's Happening With the Sixth Power Plan

May 2008

PNUCC has jumped into the thick of the discussions about what assumptions and analysis should underpin the Sixth Power Plan. This month, we've met with members of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council to make sure they understand the utility viewpoint, and we've talked load forecasting with Council staff in an effort to dovetail our work with what they have in mind for the next Plan. All of this activity is geared toward getting the Council on the same page as the power industry when it comes to addressing future challenges to the region's power system. We are already wrestling with an abundance of complex questions important to the region's next Power Plan with loads of thinking on the load forecast.

- **A Peek at Peak Demand:** PNUCC is spearheading an effort to assess the current regional hourly peak demand. Several studies provide perplexing pictures about the magnitude of our winter and summer peak loads. We expect that our analysis will reconcile the various estimates and provide us with an increased level of confidence in assessing the region's ability to meet future peak needs.
- **Carbon Footprint and Electric Cars:** Impending climate change policies is a major uncertainty for the power industry. At their May meeting, PNUCC Board members raised the issue of electrifying the transportation sector, and its impact on future electric loads. Likewise at a recent Council meeting, Council member Tom Karier said encouraging more use of electric vehicles could cut carbon emissions, but first, the Council needs a hard analysis of how that would affect the region's electricity load. Looks like we are on the same page on this issue.
- **We've Got Thirsty Data Centers:** Council staff says a single Google search activates 7,000 servers, and the Northwest is home to a growing number of data centers that house those servers. Studies estimate data centers account for at least 600 MWA of load in the Northwest, with a projection that amount could double by 2011. The Council wants to work with utilities to improve the information on this load and devise efficiency measures to moderate its impact in the future.

- **The Natural Gas Factor:** The Northwest Gas Association has asked the Council to update its 1984 study on fuel switching, or the direct use of natural gas. This new analysis would factor in CO2 control issues, current fuel prices and assess the impact of newer technologies that weren't in use 14 years ago. And it could shed light on the implications of utilities' acquiring fuel conversions as if they were an electricity resource.
- **Coming Up in June:** The Council's Power Committee members will attend our board meeting to talk about developing the Sixth Power Plan, and PNUCC staff will present PNUCC's 2008 *Northwest Regional Forecast* at the Council's meeting in Spokane. Resource adequacy, BPA transmission, conservation assessment and the Chicago Climate Exchange are also on the Council's agenda.

We invite your participation and seek your insight on any and all of these issues. Call me if you have questions -- we'll update you again next month.



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