

BPA bond sale may lessen rise in electric rate

By CATHERINE SIEGNER
Of the Emerald

The Bonneville Power Administration, the federal marketing agency for electric power in the Northwest, hopes to moderate its planned 90 percent rate increase to wholesale customers next year through the issuance of short-term bonds, BPA Administrator Sterling Munro told the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

Munro also said the answer to Northwest energy problems lies in the regional legislation his former boss, Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.), introduced last August. The bill has been stalled in Congress twice due to opposition from Northwest public utilities and environmentalists.



Sterling Munro

Photo by Steve Dykes

BPA's rate increase comes because of contracts it has with the Washington Public Power Supply System, a consortium of public utilities in Washington state that is building three nuclear plants at the Hanford Reservation near Richland.

The contracts call for BPA to finance debt service on bonds issued by WPPSS for plants Nos. 1 and 2, not yet completed. BPA must pay the costs whether or not the plants are producing power. Recent cost overruns have set construction schedules back and prompted an official BPA audit of the projects.

Munro said WPPSS agrees that "it may be possible to postpone BPA's contractual obligations until power actually starts coming on line—at least for WPPSS Nuclear Unit No. 1—and instead finance these debt service costs by a special bond issue."

The BPA administrator said doing this on the No. 1 plant would cut "25 to 30 percentage points off the 90 percent wholesale power rate increase we have proposed for the 1979-81 rate period."

He said if BPA can confirm this possible good news, heavy irrigators would benefit the most.

Some farm operators regularly run up \$600 electric bills each month to operate irrigation equipment.

Munro spoke about the regional energy bill as a way of restructuring power allocations in the Northwest.

"BPA has had to give formal notice of insufficiency to our preference customers. That means . . . we cannot guarantee meeting their load growth requirements after 1983."

BPA's announcement of the 90 percent wholesale rate hike in September was greeted in a less than enthusiastic way by the public bodies and cooperatives that will be affected—including the Eugene Water & Electric Board and the Springfield Utility Board.

EWEB is anticipating a 4.5 percent electric rate increase next year. Springfield will probably bear a greater hike, since it receives all of its power from Bonneville.

Munro said the rate boost will have the greatest impact on heavy users of irrigation equipment. The Rural Electric Co-ops serve 99 percent of Oregon's farms, but only seven percent of the state's total electric customers, he said.

Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.) has scheduled hearings on the bill around the Northwest. Dingell chairs the House Commerce committee which is working on the legislation. The Portland hearing will be on Wednesday, Dec. 13, in the BPA auditorium.

Poll results delayed

The results of an election held in the Amazon Family Housing project this weekend may not be known for a few days because ballot-makers failed to indicate where votes should be deposited, project director Willy Hart said Monday.

Policy Board, created in August 1977 by a University tenant group, has been unable to meet since July because of dwindling membership, Hart said.



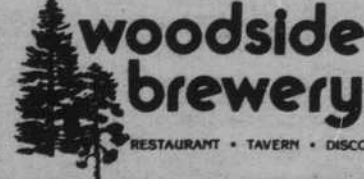
When tallies are finalized, Amazon residents will have elected three new members to their housing policy board, and 11 area representatives who will do organizational work for Amazon Community Tenants and serve as liaisons from residents to policy board members.

The Amazon Family Housing

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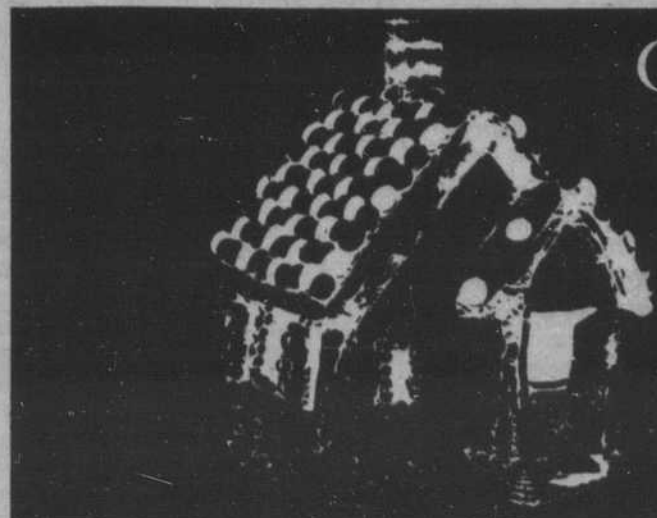
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Clinic to sell Yule trees

Christmas trees will be for sale at Whitebird Dec. 9-24 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Whitebird invites customers to enjoy their fire and a hot cup of cider while picking out a tree. They will deliver trees to people without cars.

Whitebird, a medical clinic with 24-hour crisis intervention and counseling services, is located at 341 E. 12th Ave.



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