

Local & State

FOUR LOWER SNAKE RIVER DAMS IN SOUTHEASTERN WASHINGTON

Three-year deal sets new water spill requirements for Snake River dams

■ Agreement gives federal government more flexibility in operating the four dams

By Cameron Probert
Tri-City Herald

KENNEWICK, Wash. — A new agreement aims to boost salmon populations and preserve inexpensive power in hopes of ending a decades-long legal battle over the future of the four lower Snake River dams.

Three federal agencies, including the Bonneville Power Administration, joined Oregon and Washington officials and the Nez Perce Tribe in signing off on a three-year plan filed Tuesday in U.S. District Court in Portland.

The move creates more flexibility for the federal agency running the dams, allowing them to focus on producing power for the eight hours in the day when it's most needed, and increase the amount of water heading over the dam during the rest of the day.

The changes will only affect the dam's operations between April and mid-June when spring chinook are heading to the ocean.

This comes on the heels of a court-ordered spill last spring and while the 2019 spill levels will stay the same, the agreement calls for sending more water over the dam in 2020 and 2021.

Collaboration is the key to managing the Columbia River system, federal and state officials said in a joint news release.

"Working together, the region's states, tribes and federal agencies have developed an approach that demonstrates environmental stewardship and affordable sustainable energy are not mutually exclusive," they said.

Alongside the agreement, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and U.S. Fish and Wildlife are studying the impact the change will make on the environment.

The federal lawsuit will be paused until those studies are finished.

The agreement aims to help young salmon heading to the ocean while allowing federal officials the ability to be flexible with power production, the administration said.

Environmental groups leading the charge in court, represented by Earthjustice, called the agreement a step forward in the continuing battle over the dams, but not the solution for salmon.

"It is a stop-gap measure to help struggling salmon populations for the next three

years," said Todd True, an Earthjustice attorney. "We should ultimately be working toward restoring a free-flowing lower Snake River by removing the four lower Snake River dams."

The move is not what Reps. Dan Newhouse, R-Sunnyside, and Cathy McMorris Rodgers, R-Spokane, were looking for either.

In a joint statement, they called the costly plan "worse than useless."

They pointed out federal scientists haven't determined whether increasing the amount spilled would help salmon, and in the meantime, it could cost the administration up to \$38 million.

"Increasing spill to this unprecedented new level may actually threaten young fish with 'the bends' due to the effect of increasing dissolved gasses," the representatives said in a joint statement. "The purpose of this agreement was to end litigation, but there is no indication that it will even do that."

Northwest RiverPartners also questioned whether the agreement would really solve the problems faced by salmon in the area. The alliance of farmers, utilities, ports and

businesses issued a statement Tuesday.

"We are encouraged that this agreement intends to put a temporary halt to the ongoing litigation that for so long has ill-served our region," the organization said. "At the same time, we are concerned about the unprecedented and scientifically unproven levels of new spill being contemplated by the agreement."

The organization's leaders are calling on the state to study what the effect of the spill will be before signing off on any changes to existing water quality standards. The standards were put in place to protect salmon and other species, and this could invite more lawsuits if it hurts fish.

Whether this change will actually make a difference in the amount of salmon heading to the ocean depends on which scientific study is used. The competing models show drastically different results from sending more water over the dams.

Without more information about whether this will actually benefit the salmon, increasing the amount of water and dissolved gas in the river is a problem, Northwest RiverPartners said.

LOCAL BRIEFING

State Sen. Cliff Bentz appointed to several legislative committees

SALEM — State Sen. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, who represents Baker County in the Oregon Legislature, has been appointed to several committees.

- Vice chair, Senate Finance and Revenue Committee
 - Co-vice chair, Joint Carbon Reduction Committee
 - Co-vice chair, Joint Tax Expenditures Committee
 - Member, Joint Transportation Committee
 - Member, Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
 - Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
- Bentz is also one of the Senate's deputy Republican leaders.

"I am pleased with the committee assignments," Bentz said in a press release. "Except for Judiciary, I was on similar committees while in the House, so I am happy to have the opportunity to put my 10 years of House experience to work for Oregon and my District now that I am in the Senate."

Volunteers sought to serve on review board for children in foster care

Baker County residents are needed to serve as volunteers on a board that reviews the cases for every child in foster care in the county.

The Citizen Review Board reviews every foster child's case every six months as required by state law.

The boards consist of three to seven volunteers who are appointed by the Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court. Board members are given case files to review in advance. They serve on a panel for one day every other month to review foster care cases.

More information is available by calling John Nichols at 541-233-8142 or by email at john.a.nichols@ojd.state.or.us

Baker City irrigation company receives honor from Reinke Manufacturing Co.

Officials from Reinke Manufacturing Co., which builds center pivot irrigation systems, presented the company's Diamond Reinke Pride award recently to Adam and Logan Kerns of Agricultural Construction of Baker City.

The Kernses' business is one of the company's five highest-selling dealers in its Southwest Territory, according to a press release.

Baker City has openings on several boards and commissioners

Baker City is seeking volunteers to fill vacancies on several boards and commissions.

- Budget Board, four vacancies, terms expire January 2022
 - Airport Commission, three vacancies, terms expire January 2023
 - Public Works Advisory Committee, two vacancies, one expires January 2020, one January 2022
 - Tree Board, three vacancies, terms expire July 2021
 - Planning Commission, five vacancies, terms expire in January 2020 or January 2023
- Volunteers should submit an application by noon on Jan. 4. Application forms are available at www.bakercity.com. More information is available by calling Julie Smith at 541-524-2033.

Thanks to all who donated to Abby Graven fundraiser

Friends and family of Abby Graven would like to thank the following individuals and businesses for their generous donations during the silent auction and chili feed fundraiser for Abby Graven. Our hearts are full and we are so grateful to have been a part of witnessing such incredible love, kindness and generosity.

Anthony Lakes Mt. Resort; Appiances and More; Terri Axness; Baker Aircraft; Baker City Auto Ranch; Baker Dental Group; Baker Valley Tire; Barley Brown's Brew Pub; Behlen Manufacturing; Bingham, Bingham and Watt; Bi-Mart, Baker City; Black Distributing; Britt Sand & Gravel; Broderick

Gallery; Luke Brown; Chuck and Cheryl Buchanan; Burger Bob's Drive-In; Cody's General Store; Bob Colton; Bonnie Colton; Commercial Tire; Copper Belt Winery; Craft Brew Alliance; Wade and Betty Dahlen; Gennie Dethloff; D & J Taco Shop; Eagle Cap Grill; El Erradero; Eltrym Theater; Destini Felton; Dave and Sandy Gobel; Golden Crown Restaurant; Grocery Outlet; Grove Team Real Estate; Guyer & Associates; Haines Steak House; Kelly and Rob Hardy; Harrell Herford Ranch; Hills Auto Parts; Hooks & Horns Cabins; Christina Smith; Inland Cafe; J. Tabor Jewelers; Kimberly Jonas; Katie's Cupcakes; Tom and Fawn Kerns; Lefty's Tap House; Lew Bros. Les Schwab Tire; Lotus Yoga

Studio; Janie Mahaffey; Lube Depot; Mad Habit; Dr. Kim and Janie Mahaffey; Main Event Sports Bar & Eatery; Marvin Wood Products; Myron and Dotty Miles; Waynette Morin; Patty Nash; David Nemarnik; No. 1911; Danny O'Neil; Oregon Trail Livestock; Oregon Trail Restaurant; Pendleton Roundup & Happy Canyon; Puka Dog; Queen City Modern; Rite Aid, Baker City; Robbins Equipment; John and Kate Rohner; Royal Artisan; Saint Anthony Parishioners; North Powder; Janie and Scott Selby; Shady Brook Farms; David and Kathy Sherman; Lisa Shira; Side A Brewing; Silven, Schmeits & Vaughan; Sorbenots Coffee; Chuck and Nancy Staten; Sunfire Real Estate; Super 8 Motel, Baker

City; Sweet Wife Baking; Sycamore Tree; T2 Engraving; The Lone Pine Cafe; Theresa's Treasures; Thomas Angus Ranch; Treasure Every Stitch; Brian Vegter; Mark, Lisa and Matt Ward; Ward Potatoes; Wisdom House B&B.

Thank you to everyone who purchased silent auction items, donated to the free-will donation chili feed and to those of you who made cash donations. You have all made a difference in the life of this beautiful young woman as she and her family move forward. Please forgive us if we've overlooked a name and know that you are appreciated. We are blessed to live in such a caring community.

Sandi Baer
Baker City

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