

Power of the People

By W. Marc Farmer, General Manager,
West Oregon Electric Cooperative



Real Numbers!

There has been a lot of discussion and press regarding breaching the four dams on the Snake River. There are those who purport that public sentiment is on their side in trying to justify their position. The numbers do not support this claim and I felt it was important to set the record straight on this issue. In that effort, I will be using the remain-

der of my space to share with you an article from Northwest River Partners regarding an independent poll conducted on this issue and some facts regarding the impact if the dams were removed. I think you will find it enlightening and informative. This issue is important to us as there is a lack of recognition that hydro is a renewable energy and that dam removal will require replacing a firm renewable energy source with a fossil fuel source. This is neither cheap nor a wise choice.

New poll shows Pacific Northwest voters oppose breaching Snake River dams by wide margin

Two-thirds of voters in the Pacific Northwest oppose breaching dams on the lower Snake River, viewing it as an extreme measure to improve salmon runs on the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

“Dam removal would be economically devastating to the Northwest’s energy picture and use of the rivers as an economic highway” said Terry Flores, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners. “It also runs completely counter to the goal of reducing carbon emissions and would pose a serious setback to meeting the reduction targets set by the states”, she added.

“The most dramatic impact would be eliminating 1,100 megawatts of clean hydroelectric power from the region – enough to power a city the size of Seattle – combined with sharp increases in electric rates that will further hurt the Northwest’s economy already reeling from job losses,” Flores said.

Two-thirds of citizens surveyed recognized that fossil fuels contributing to climate change would replace the energy if the clean and renewable dams were removed.

An overwhelming majority – 88% – identified hydro as renewable – similar to wind and solar resources. And 69% acknowledged that hydro is more reliable than wind because no electricity is generated when the wind doesn’t blow. More than two-thirds recognize that hydro does not contribute to global warming.

“The public really ‘gets it’, Flores noted, “and it is critical that our legislators and policy-makers understand how highly valued hydro is so they can incorporate that into their energy and climate change policies.” Citizens showed overwhelming support – 79% – for states and the U.S. Congress to declare hydro as a renewable resource.

Northwest RiverPartners, a partnership of individuals and businesses that support the region’s working rivers and fish recovery, measured regional attitudes about the Pacific Northwest hydroelectric system, energy and fish, in a poll of 700 registered voters in Washington, Oregon and Idaho. Tim Hibbitts of Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, Inc., conducted the survey in February 2009.

“Given that current efforts to improve salmon runs are paying off, extreme and economically damaging moves like removal of Snake River dams should not even be on the table for discussion,” Flores said.

Flores noted that the poll results are consistent with polling since 2005 and reflect the high awareness in the region of the importance of hydroelectric power with 93% describing electricity production as an essential or important use of the river.

Northwest RiverPartners is an alliance of farmers, utilities, ports and business that promote the economic and environmental benefits of the Columbia and Snake Rivers and salmon recovery policies based on sound science.

Forestry Board asks for help with list

What issues should the Oregon Board of Forestry put on its priority list as it works toward its goal of sound, sustainable management of Oregon’s forests? Through its 2009 biennial issue scan, the seven-member board is inviting the public to help answer that question.

Through May 22, people are invited to suggest forest-related issues for the board to consider as it sets its priorities for the next two years.

“During economic times such as these, careful priority-setting is more important than ever,” said Dan Postrel, agency affairs director with the Oregon Department of Forestry. “Forests cover almost half of Oregon’s land area, and are essential to our state’s well-being, quality of life, and culture. The board is seeking ideas about how this resource can be managed sustainably to benefit all Oregonians.”

More information about the issue scan, including background on the board’s current priorities, work plans and strategies, is available on the board’s Web site, at www.oregon.gov/odf/board.

Input for the 2009 issue scan may be:

- Submitted from the board’s Web site.
- Sent by postal mail to Oregon Department of Forestry, Dan Postrel, 2600 State Street, Salem, OR 97310.
- Faxed to Dan Postrel’s attention at 503-945-7212.

Web and fax submissions must be received by 5:00 p.m. on May 22. Mailed comments must be postmarked by that date. People are asked to limit the description of each proposed issue to 500 words.

A work group that includes two members of the board will review and organize the ideas, seek additional information if necessary, and pass the comments along to the full board, with recommendations about priorities.

The Board of Forestry, appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state Senate, oversees all forest policy matters within the state’s jurisdiction. The board’s duties include appointing the state forester, setting management direction for state-owned forests, and adopting rules regulating timber harvest on private land.

The board also provides a forum for public discussion and policy-making that addresses all of Oregon’s forests.

The board uses its overarching strategic policy document, the Forestry Program for Ore-

gon, for guidance as it sets priorities and plans its work. Information about the document, which emphasizes sustainability of a wide range of forest values, is also available at www.oregon.gov/odf/board.

Do you want Broadband here?

Be part of the solution!

The Northwest Oregon Broadband Taskforce was formed to apply for stimulus funding through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP) to expand high-speed internet services to the business and residential communities of Columbia, Clatsop and Tillamook Counties. Public and private partnerships have joined to expand this effort. Schools, hospitals, and emergency service providers are all encouraged to participate.

This will be a huge economic boost for the area and will undoubtedly stimulate growth in existing businesses, spur the formation of new businesses, and grow jobs throughout the region!

At the forefront of the process is the need to identify

the “underserved” population by location on the regional map. Time is of the essence, so the Taskforce is asking each resident/business to join in making high speed broadband a reality.

Add your business/residential location to our data base at: www.ipns.com/broadband

For further information contact Donna Nyberg at 503-320-2050.

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