

Power of the People

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



The following article is from an organization that WOE is a member of and supports their efforts to support reasonable, affordable, and scientific approaches to renewable energy, our federal based dam system, and efforts to protect salmon. As part of their work, Northwest River Partners conduct periodic polls to make sure the true opinion of the people is known and represented in the decision making processes. The results of the latest poll has just been released and we would like to share those results with you.

Northwest citizens support clean renewable hydropower; staunchly oppose destroying lower Snake River dams

Northwest voters understand hydroelectric power is the region's premier source of clean, renewable energy and staunchly support keeping the lower Snake River dams.

"Despite an ongoing campaign by a small group of anti-dam activists, public opposition to destroying the dams is unwavering," said Terry Flores, executive director of Northwest RiverPartners.

Flores noted that more than 67 percent of the region's voters – including a striking 79 percent in Idaho – support the importance of the Snake River dams to the region's power system – a view unchanged since polling began in 2005.

"Voters in the Northwest clearly value dams and their contribution to our clean renewable power sys-

tem and realize the Lower Snake River dams are vital," Flores said.

Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, a Portland polling firm, conducted a public opinion poll in March for Northwest RiverPartners, which promotes policies to protect and restore healthy runs of salmon and the many benefits provided by the Columbia and Snake Rivers and hydro system.

In the poll of 700 registered voters in Oregon, Washington and Idaho, hydro power is viewed as clean, renewable and climate friendly with 70 percent of respondents recognizing it does not contribute to global warming.

"Many are aware that the hydropower system is a vital link to bringing even more renewable energy sources on line in the Northwest," Flores said.

"Voters continue to see hydro, wind and solar as part of a renewable team to provide energy to the Northwest and hydro continues to be seen as the most practical source of energy," said pollster Tim Hibbitts, citing a response in which 42 percent identified hydroelectric power as the most practical energy source for the region with wind power a distant second at 26 percent.

"Voters continue to care about salmon as they always have, but in these tough economic times, they are also very sensitive to increased energy costs," Hibbitts said.

Nearly 70 percent of respondents say they would be concerned – 34 percent would be very concerned – if their electricity rates increased five percent every couple of years solely to improve salmon runs. More than half were concerned or very concerned with even a 2.5 percent increase in their power bills.

Flores also said the public's endorsement of the region's clean renewable hydropower emphasizes need to move ahead with the plan to help the Northwest's protected salmon and steelhead which has been stuck in court for two years.

"The plan has been developed collaboratively by federal agencies, three states, Native American tribes and other stakeholders and includes the best science for protecting fish runs," Flores said, "Under the 2008 plan, hydro and fish can co-exist and prosper which aligns with the public's goals."

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.

Commissioners honor RSVP volunteers

Volunteers from the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) who serve at the Columbia County Courthouse in various departments, were honored at the April 28 meeting of the Columbia County Board of Commissioners. The Board noted that there had been a total of 1,871 hours of volunteer service in the past year, that provided the county with \$39,010 in savings.

Visitors to the Courthouse are greeted by RSVP Volunteers who assist them in finding the various departments. Site Supervisor Sally Norbom recruits, trains and schedules the volunteers. "The volunteers provide guidance and assist people when they don't know where to go to complete county business", Norbom said. "We get a lot of satisfaction from helping people, so the benefits of the RSVP program go both ways."

Other volunteers who are indispensable in helping the coun-

ty are Linda Gaskill and Andrew Myers, both of whom volunteer in the District Attorney's office. Gaskill has been working with the Victims Assistance Program since 2000 and is currently working with the Multi-Disciplinary Team, giving an average of 20 hours per week to the program. Her work helps keep vulnerable children from slipping through bureaucratic cracks.

Myers volunteers as a Deputy District Attorney and has a long history of volunteering that includes teaching, working with immigrant victims of domestic abuse, Legal Aid Services of Oregon and rebuilding neighborhoods. He began in March and is putting his skills to good use while he searches for a permanent position. Myers assists with the misdemeanor caseload and justice court cases.

Gina Harrington and Paul-ette Lichatowich, who are Community Meal site volunteers,

were also honored by the Board. Harrington and Lichatowich serve at the Community Meal site in the First Lutheran Parish Hall at 4th and Wyeth Streets in St. Helens, providing free meals to the community.

The Community Meals program, a member of the Columbia Pacific Food Bank, operates as a benevolent kitchen, and is the only program of its kind in Columbia County. The program serves a warm health free meal to an average of 90 guests per evening every Tuesday and Thursday from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

The Board of County Commissioners expressed appreciation to all of these volunteers. For additional information on how you can get involved in volunteer programs, contact Jan Kenna, Director of Children and Family Services at 503-397-7211.

See picture on page 9.

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