

## Northwest Power and Conservation Council

Meeting Notes  
December 13-14, 2016  
Portland, Oregon

In December, the Council meeting was eclipsed by national headlines that Portland was paralyzed by a titanic two inches of snowfall. Fortunately, Council members were able to conduct business and scoot out of town before Portland-area drivers slid onto the roadways to play vehicular pinball.

The Council meeting's highlights included an analysis by Council staff on the region's energy usage which showed loads have continued to decline across most customer sectors — despite an improved economic picture. Also, Bonneville's Lorri Bodi, vice president of environment, fish and wildlife, shared where the agency stood in terms of reporting its habitat improvement pilot projects, while Council Member Tom Karier again asserted that the programs should be shut down if they can't show results.

The Corps of Engineers responded to a call to action to address invasive mussels in Eastern Montana. And, the Council also heard about efforts by the Action Agencies to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the Columbia River System operations. The next Council meeting will return to Portland, Oregon on January 10-11, 2017.

### NOTEWORTHY

Montana Governor Bullock named Tim Baker to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council effective January 6<sup>th</sup>. He will replace Pat Smith who has served on the Council since 2013.

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## The Agenda

### **Region is growing, economy improving, power usage stunted**

#### Energy efficiency and warm weather impact sales

Energy efficiency is doing its job, and warmer weather is contributing to lower sales according to Massoud Jourabchi, staff economic analysis manager, as Council staff continues to look at declining loads in spite of an improved economy.

In 2015, regional electricity sales were lower than 2014 by 287 MWa. That's significant for utilities, he said, and the trend continues. Jourabchi pointed to warmer weather as the major culprit where his analysis found that if usage were normalized for weather, sales would have been up by 670 aMW. He added that another contributing factor in flattening consumption is energy efficiency and programmatic conservation. Natural gas is seeing the same trend, he said. And with a 3 percent drop every year as energy efficiency has reduced consumption, "It's all about doing more with less," he said.

Council Member Jennifer Anders asked if these findings were significant enough to affect the staff's modeling. Jourabchi affirmed that a hybrid model would be created to take temperature and weather into account.

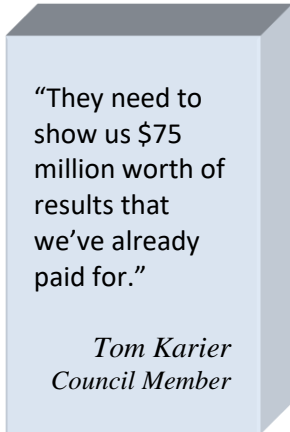
### **Council continues to seek solid results for habitat improvement projects**

#### \$9 million a year questioned

Council members remained steadfast in their pursuit of results-oriented data from BPA's three tributary habitat improvement pilot projects: Columbia Habitat Monitoring Program (CHaMP), Integrated Status and Effectiveness Monitoring Program (ISEMP) and Action Effectiveness Monitoring of Tributary Habitat Improvement (AEM). Lorri Bodi, BPA's vice president of environment, fish and wildlife, began the session by saying they are looking at data and results to understand where to make improvements.

Katie McDonald, BPA's tributary habitat research, monitoring and evaluation lead, provided an overview of the recommendations and progress to date. During the question period, Member Karier was unmoved. "There wasn't much about budgets or numbers in the presentation," he said. "They're very expensive projects, I think the budget is \$9 million a year for the three projects... the science is fine, but the results are absent" he said.

"The questions aren't that hard: What are the benefits of habitat investment on abundance, productivity and diversity? I haven't seen anything in the presentation or the ISEMP and CHaMP reports," Karier said.



"They need to show us \$75 million worth of results that we've already paid for."

*Tom Karier  
Council Member*

Member Karier again recommended that the Council suspend funding. Bodi replied that this is the right moment in time for all these questions. “We’re looking for how much we need to know to make informed habitat decisions. In general, we have an increased emphasis on analyzing results and providing results that are useful to managers.”

Member Karier said, “As long as we keep in mind that it’s not just going forward. They need to show us \$75 million worth of results that we’ve already paid for.”

### **Corps offers a funding infusion to fight invasive mussels**

#### [\\$3.75 million in federal cost-share funds to four Columbia Basin states](#)

What started as a dinner bell has now become a fire alarm, as regional agencies are working to respond to the discovery of invasive mussels in eastern Montana. For the past year, Council presentations have warned about the spread of invasive mussels, and biologists have stated that Northwest waters are vulnerable to contamination from boats returning from the Southwest and Midwestern states.

Representatives from the Corps of Engineers appeared before the Council to announce that \$3.75 million in federal cost-share funds would be available for watercraft inspection stations in the four Columbia Basin states. The effort would be coordinated with states, tribes and federal



agencies. It would include monitoring (early detection and identifying high-risk areas), contingency planning and rapid-response plans, and a public awareness campaign.

The primary concern is whether this effort will be up and running in time for the 2017 boating season. “Unless this kicks into gear fast, we’ll miss this season,” warned Member Booth. He said that people have to decide where the money’s going and what matching funds are needed.

Corps representatives replied that they hope to have the effort underway this February. The money is set aside and can be processed quickly, so long as documentation doesn’t hold it up, they said. Council Member Henry Lorenzen stressed that the Council is prepared to do whatever it can to help move the effort along.

### **Columbia River System Operations EIS comment period nears a close**

#### [Everything is on the table, not just power](#)

After 2,000 attendees and more than 40,000 comments, David Kennedy, Bonneville Power Administration; Rebecca Weiss, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; and Sonja Kokos, the Bureau of Reclamation, discussed the public scoping period with the Council (which has been extended to

February 9, 2017). They said the EIS calls for the Corps, Bureau, and Bonneville to present a reasonable range of alternatives for long-term system operations, and to evaluate the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts on flood risk management, irrigation, power generation, navigation, fish and wildlife, cultural resources and recreation.

Following U.S. District Judge Michael Simon's ruling, "We're looking at everything instead of just power," Kennedy said. The EIS is evaluating alternatives and tradeoffs (including climate change and dam breaching) and the effects on resources (including ESA-listed species, cultural resources and economics).

A status report on the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is due to the court in Oct. 30, 2017, and a status conference is set for Nov. 30, 2017. A draft EIS is due March 2020, with a final EIS due March 2021.

Member Karier inquired about the cost of the project. Kennedy answered it will cost about \$40 million for the effort and will be absorbed by stakeholders, such as BPA ratepayers, and other agencies.

## **Council Briefs**

### [Northwest carbon emissions low](#)

Regional emissions are down slightly, according to Gillian Charles, staff energy policy analyst, in a presentation to the Power Committee. They continue to follow the Council's prediction in the Seventh Power Plan of 40-60 million metric tons (MMT) per year. Last year, the region was at 51 MMT. It consistently varies according to the water years: With more hydro, there's less thermal and carbon emitted. Although with upcoming coal plant retirements throughout the Northwest will continue to reduce emissions, she said.

### [Power bill comparison shows little difference between IOUs and publics](#)

On average, over the past 10 years the bills for investor-owned utilities (IOUs) have been similar to publicly owned utilities, according to a Power Committee report.

### [Demand Response Advisory Committee proves to be a big draw](#)

Demand Response Advisory Committee draws crowd from all sectors across the region. The committee will be working on definitions, setting it up for the next power plan, and looking at barriers to implementing demand response to make it a more effective resource for the region.

### [Council approves next steps to update GENESYS modeling](#)

The Council voted to seek an outside vendor through an RFP to update its GENESYS energy modeling software. GENESYS simulates the operation of the region's power system. The budget range is \$300,000-450,000, with project completion slated for the end of fiscal year 2018.