



Northwest Power and Conservation Council Meeting Notes Feb. 8, 9 & 10, 2016 Portland, Oregon

Northwest Power and Conservation Council members spent most of February’s meetings poking, prodding and clarifying an assortment of details in the *Seventh Northwest Power Plan*’s language. This fine-tuning followed months of analysis, drafting, soliciting public comment and redrafting before the final vote on February 10. Unanimously the Council approved the *Seventh Northwest Power Plan* amidst smiles and applause. The next meeting is March 8-9, in Portland, Oregon.

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The Agenda

Council members perform due diligence on Seventh Plan before vote

For five days the Council combed through the *Draft Seventh Northwest Power Plan* to ferret out any inconsistencies and to digest new input from the 60-day public comment period. A few of the changes incorporated include:



Reduced long-term regional goal for cost-effective conservation – The goal was slightly adjusted in later years as a result of lower natural gas prices. The changed resulted in efficiency goals of 3,000 aMW by 2026 and 4,300 aMW by 2035.

Expanded regional demand response infrastructure – The plan incorporates a non-specific 600 MW target to be examined during the midterm. Staff added language to build on the successes of utility energy-efficiency programs and leverage them for demand response. Tom Eckman, Council staff’s Power Planning Director, explained that an example of leveraged demand response would be lighting

controls in commercial/industrial facilities. They can be integrated with a call for demand response and can be reduced when they're not needed.

Added renewable generation technology options considered for Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) compliance - The Council staff added geothermal and solar photovoltaic as into the renewable mix. The draft plan states, “As utilities continue to comply with existing state Renewable Portfolio Standards they should assess the cost and generation potential for utility-scale solar photovoltaic and geothermal technologies when developing strategies to comply with existing state Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS). Each utility should consider its own cost and resource need profile in such assessments. The Council will review utility Integrated Resource Plans and state compliance processes to track the types of renewable resources developed under state RPS.”

Highlights of state differences in meeting Clean Power Plan mandates - The Council did not evaluate resource strategies for state level compliance with EPA’s Clean Power Plan carbon dioxide emissions limits. While the region overall complies with Clean Power Plan limits, Montana has to reduce its carbon emissions by 47 percent. Of course, the entire question of the Clean Power Plan is on hold as the U.S. Supreme Court stayed its implementation. The order blocks the rules from taking effect while the legal fight plays out in the appeals court and during any further appeal to the Supreme Court, a process that easily could extend into 2017, according to John Shurts, Council staff’s general counsel.

NEEL requests Power Plan Action Item for regional forum

During the Power Plan’s public comment period, the co-chairs and signed participants of the 2015 Northwest Energy Efficiency Leadership meeting asked the Council to insert an Action Item that would convene a forum bringing together utility regulators, along with investor-owned and consumer-owned utility leaders to explore the benefits of alternative business models and rate designs. The request also said “the *Seventh Plan* should underscore the need to put energy efficiency on the same plane as other utility resource investments (for both utilities and their customers).”

Council Members noted that BPA Administrator Elliot Mainzer and many PNUCC members are proponents of this forum, but they said that the scope of it remains a question — specifically to what extent it should include rate structures and regulators. Council Chair Henry Lorenzen suggested initiating a process to determine the interest in convening a forum, which was agreed to by the Council members.

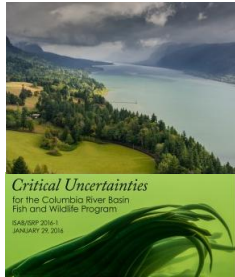
Recommendations on critical uncertainties revise Research Plan

The *2014 Fish and Wildlife Program* calls for the Northwest Power and Conservation Council to review ongoing research and revise the Program’s Research Plan. To help update the Research Plan, the Council asked the Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB) and Independent Scientific Review Panel (ISRP) to reexamine the Research Plan’s critical uncertainties and to recommend revisions. The full report can be read [here](#).

Critical uncertainties are “important knowledge gaps about resources and the functional relationships that determine fish and wildlife productivity in the Columbia River ecosystem.”

“You gave us a heck of an assignment,” said Steve Schroder, ISRP chair and ISAB vice-chair. “There was no lack of uncertainties. When Nancy Leonard (the Council’s fish, wildlife and ecosystem M&E report manager) went through 130 reports, she identified 1,400 uncertainties.”

Schroder said the uncertainties were looked at, put into one of 14 themes and then organized further into a searchable database. Then they were asked to prioritize them by how much progress has been made and how they met the Fish & Wildlife Program’s goals and objectives.



One of the themes discussed is hydrosystem and passage operations. Another is the feasibility of re-introducing anadromous runs of salmonids to areas that are now inaccessible due to dams. While the presentation went into further detail on many different impacts and uncertainties, the panel offered the following recommendations to help revise the Research Plan and improve research within the Program during the next five years:

- Improve communication on research issues and results among project proponents, the public, governmental entities, the Tribes, and others involved with the Basin’s water, land, and fish and wildlife resources.
- Foster efforts to synthesize information generated by independent studies.
- Recognize that research on the expected impacts of climate change and human development in the Basin should be taken into account when setting future program objectives.
- Support research to identify thermal refuges and ways to secure the availability and quality of water essential to achieving program objectives.
- Recognize that toxic contaminants are pervasive in the Basin. Support research to determine threats to fish, wildlife, and people.
- Support research to guide the management of non-native species.
- Continue supporting research on artificial propagation that will help to measure the benefits and risks to natural populations. Encourage research to help develop biological escapement goals for the Basin’s salmonid populations and refine approaches for harvesting surplus hatchery fish.
- Expand research to identify and track changes in population structure and genetic diversity of focal species.
- Continue to support and demand rigorous monitoring and evaluation programs that have well established objectives and potential for basinwide synthesis.
- Recognize that evaluating the effectiveness of conservation actions is complicated by natural variability and statistical sampling error.
- Support research on ecological interactions in mainstem, lower Columbia River, estuary, ocean plume, and ocean habitats. Understanding the factors in each habitat that limit population growth will improve management of habitat, harvest, hatcheries and hydrosystem.

Council Member Bill Booth thanked the group for their work and said, “Often work like this doesn’t result in much change. If we’re going to spend time developing a new research plan, we need to do it from a perspective of what we’re trying to change and a decision on what our goal is.”

Council Member Jim Yost added, “We need to look at what science may recommend, but there has to be a group of statesmen — not politicians — to determine how we should proceed.”