



W. T. (TOM) TRULOVE  
Vice Chairman

Anderson Hall  
North 9th & Elm Streets  
Post Office Box B  
Cheney, Washington 99004  
(509) 359-7352

STATE OF WASHINGTON

NORTHWEST POWER PLANNING COUNCIL

R. TED BOTTIGER  
Washington Representative  
809 Legion Way S.E., FA-11  
Olympia, Washington 98504  
(206) 586-8069

January 12, 1988

Dear Interested Party:

The Northwest Power Planning Council is considering a proposal to classify about 14,000 miles of Washington's streams for protection from future hydropower development because of their importance to fish and wildlife. The proposal's goals are to protect the ratepayer's investment in fish and wildlife restoration and to assist hydropower developers to focus their attention on environmentally feasible sites.

The Council has issued a staff paper entitled "Protected Areas Designation," which lists the guidelines for classifying streams, estimates the impact to Washington's hydropower potential, and outlines a number of alternatives. A fact sheet is enclosed for your reference and copies of the issue paper may be obtained by calling either of our offices.

If you are interested in the proposal, we would be happy to meet with you upon request. After considering all comments, the Council expects to decide at its April meeting whether to amend its fish and wildlife program to designate protected areas. If we do enter this rulemaking process, there will be a new public comment period and hearings in each state before we make a final decision.

It is important to note that the Council does not have the legal authority to permit or prohibit hydropower projects. However, if the Council officially classifies river reaches to be protected from future hydropower development, agencies such as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (which licenses non-federal hydropower projects) are legally obligated to consider the Council's recommendations.

If you would like to discuss the proposal with us or our staff, please call for an appointment.

Thank you for your interest. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Tom Trulove  
Vice Chairman

Ted Bottiger  
Council Member

Enclosure

**NORTHWEST POWER PLANNING COUNCIL  
WASHINGTON OFFICES**

**PROTECTED AREAS FACT SHEET  
January 1988**

**ISSUE**

The "protected areas" issue refers to designating certain Northwest streams and fish and wildlife habitats as protected--that is, closed to future hydroelectric development--because of the potential impacts on fish and wildlife in those areas. An estimated 35 percent of the anadromous (ocean-migrating) fish habitat in the Columbia River Basin has already been lost due to existing hydroelectric development. The Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation continue to plan for future federal projects, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which licenses private and non-federal public hydropower projects, has 384 applications pending throughout the Northwest (about 174 of those in Washington).

**HISTORY OF THE ISSUE**

Through the Northwest Power Act of 1980, Congress directed the Northwest Power Planning Council to develop a program to "protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife, including related spawning grounds and habitat" in the Columbia River Basin. Because the program is funded by ratepayers, the Council was to address its efforts to the impacts of hydroelectric development. As the Council developed the original Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program, several parties, particularly fish and wildlife agencies and Indian tribes, urged the Council to protect fish and wildlife from future development as well as past and existing development. The Council agreed that protecting certain areas was important, but felt that uniform criteria for protection needed to be developed. While developing its original Northwest Conservation and Electric Power Plan, the Council also recognized the need to have a more reliable estimate of potential hydropower the region could produce without unduly impacting fish and wildlife. In August 1984, the Council initiated the three-year Hydropower Assessment Study. The study's purpose was to: 1) develop guidelines for identifying streams and wildlife habitat that should be protected from future hydropower development, 2) rank potential hydropower sites based on fish and wildlife concerns, and 3) identify environmentally sound hydroelectric sites for future development.

**PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES FOR PROTECTED AREAS**

Using data collected in the Hydropower Assessment Study, the Washington Departments of Fish and Wildlife and the three other state fish and wildlife agencies submitted their recommendations for protected areas to the Council's central staff. Based on those recommendations, the staff has written an issue paper that proposes the following guidelines. These guidelines would classify for protection about 13,769 miles of Washington streams from future hydropower development. The proposed alternatives include: 1) protect all areas currently used or potentially usable by anadromous (ocean-migrating) fish in the Columbia Basin; 2) protect all areas currently used by anadromous fish outside the Columbia Basin, but still within the region;

3) protect the northwest's high quality habitat for resident fish and wildlife both inside and outside the basin; and 4) provide for re-evaluation of protected areas after the Council has completed its basinwide plan to double current salmon and steelhead populations. The plan will explore each of 31 subbasins to determine its potential for increasing salmon and steelhead.

### **PARTICIPANTS IN THE STUDY**

Participants in the study included the states of Washington, Montana, Oregon and Idaho; the Columbia Basin Indian tribes; the Bonneville Power Administration; the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; hydroelectric project operators; and recreational and environmental groups.

### **BENEFITS OF PROTECTED AREAS**

The benefits of providing protected areas are to: 1) ensure that the substantial Northwest ratepayer investments to rehabilitate fish and wildlife in the Columbia Basin are not undermined by new projects; 2) provide clear signals to potential developers on the importance of fish and wildlife resources and help them focus on sites with fewer resource conflicts; and 3) provide useful information to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission so that its hydropower licensing decisions reflect the Northwest's interest in quality resource development and environmental protection.

### **POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON HYDROPOWER**

According to the proposed guidelines, protected areas would reduce Washington's future hydropower potential by about 265.5 average megawatts (based on the number of hydroelectric projects active within the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's licensing process). This would reduce Washington's future hydroelectric capacity by about 30 percent (assuming that all 174 proposed projects would be developed, which is unlikely). Regionwide, protected areas would reduce the Northwest's future hydropower potential by approximately 430 average megawatts (about a 50 percent reduction in additional capacity).

### **COUNCIL'S ROLE**

The Northwest Power Planning Council does not have the legal authority to prohibit hydroelectric projects. Protected area designations would not be zoning classifications that in themselves prevent or permit hydropower development. Rather, the designations would establish standards to be applied by certain federal agencies that are obligated under the Northwest Power Act to consider the Council's fish and wildlife program in their decision-making to the "fullest extent practicable." The Council's guidelines for protected areas are primarily directed at the agencies that manage, operate or regulate hydroelectric facilities in the region, such as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the Bonneville Power Administration, the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

The Council is asking members of the public to comment on several questions in particular: Should the Council 1) Limit its actions to the Columbia River Basin and not identify protected areas in the rest of the region? This question is especially important to Washington because a high percentage of the region's streams outside the basin are located in Washington.; 2) Protect only

the areas currently used by anadromous fish (not potentially usable areas)?; 3) Broaden the protection for resident fish and wildlife?; 4) Broaden the guidelines to include stream values other than fish and wildlife, such as recreational, cultural and aesthetic values?; 5) Delay action until "system planning" is finished (December 1989)?; or 6) Not consider amending protected areas into its regional fish and wildlife program?

#### **CURRENT STATUS AND SCHEDULE**

The Council will accept written comments on the staff issue paper, "Protected Areas Designation," through January 15, 1988. Council members and staff will be meeting personally with interested parties upon request. After considering the comments, the Council will decide within the next few months whether to consider amending protected areas into its fish and wildlife program. If the Council decides to consider an amendment, it will schedule a new public comment period and hold hearings in each state before making a final decision.

For more information or a copy of the issue paper, please contact Carol McAllister in the Cheney Office 509-359-7352 or Cathy Maynard in the Olympia Office 206-586-8071.