

news release!

NORTHWEST POWER PLANNING COUNCIL • 850 S.W. Broadway • Suite 1100 • Portland, Oregon 97205

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For immediate release:

For more information contact Dulcy Mahar

Proposal to Protect Streams from new Dams Open for Comment

NOTE TO EDITORS: A SCHEDULE OF HEARINGS IN IDAHO, OREGON, MONTANA AND WASHINGTON IS ATTACHED

The Northwest Power Planning Council has released for public comment its proposal to protect approximately 40,000 river miles of Northwest streams from further hydropower development. The proposal, which was designed to safeguard the region's fish and wildlife from losses of habitat and other dam-related hazards, will now be reviewed in public meetings in Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington. Copies of the proposal and background materials, including detailed lists of affected stream reaches, are available from the Council's central office at 851 S.W Sixth Avenue, Suite 1100, Portland, Oregon 97204, or call toll free in Oregon 1-800-452-2324; in Washington, Idaho or Montana 1-800-222-3355.

The Council's proposal grew out of efforts to rebuild valuable Northwest fish and wildlife populations, particularly salmon and steelhead runs in the Columbia River Basin. Hydroelectric dams have blocked passage for these ocean-migrating fish, and reservoirs behind the dams have flooded habitat for both fish and wildlife species. Furthermore, disputes over these and other possible consequences of hydroelectric development add to developer costs and utility rates, and leave the region less certain about its ability to develop new resources quickly when they are needed.

The Council, working with the Bonneville Power Administration and the four Northwest states, developed a list of stream reaches where new dams could have substantial and irreversible adverse effects on fish and wildlife. In the proposal now being reviewed, hydroelectric development would be prohibited along stream reaches where salmon and steelhead or wild non-seagoing (resident) fish are present. In areas where non-wild resident fish or wildlife are present, the Council's proposal would limit development to that which would not result in a net loss of such fish or wildlife.

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The proposal to designate certain areas of the Pacific Northwest as protected from hydropower development would have its strongest impact through the Council's Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program. The current process is expected to result in amendments to the program, which would then influence federal agencies that operate, develop and regulate the hydropower system in the Columbia River Basin. While the Council cannot prohibit development, the Northwest Power Act requires these federal agencies to incorporate the Council's program in their decision-making.

The Act requires the Bonneville Power Administration to be "consistent with" the fish and wildlife program and the Council's Northwest Power Plan within the basin. The proposal calls on Bonneville to refrain from acquiring hydropower in protected areas and to deny hydropower development in protected areas access to Bonneville's intertie system. (The intertie is the system through which electrical power is delivered to California for sale.)

Non-federal hydroelectric development falls within the purview of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which makes licensing decisions on particular hydroelectric project proposals. FERC must take the fish and wildlife program into account at all relevant stages of its decision-making processes "to the fullest extent practicable."

The current proposal would also result in amendments to the Council's Northwest Power Plan. The plan guides Bonneville's resource acquisitions throughout the Pacific Northwest, not just within the basin.

The proposed amendments apply only to new hydropower projects, not to existing dams. A new hydropower project would be a new structure containing hydroelectric facilities for which FERC has not issued a license.

Existing water rights, water appropriations or jurisdiction over water would not be affected by the Council's decision. Nor will the amendments alter, amend, repeal, interpret, modify or conflict with any interstate compact made by the states.

Regionwide, 40,794 river miles would be affected by the proposed amendments (less than 15 percent of the region's river miles). The Council estimates that of 327 hydroelectric projects currently proposed or under study in the Pacific Northwest, 202 would be affected, representing 688 average megawatts of energy. Another 125 projects, representing 800 average megawatts, would be unaffected.

In addition to hearings in each state, the Council will take written comment on the proposal through 5 p.m. Pacific time on July 8, 1988. Comment should be addressed to Dulcy Mahar, director of public involvement at the Council's central office. (Address noted above.)

SCHEDULE OF PROTECTED AREAS AMENDMENT HEARINGS

Richland, Washington

May 11, 7 p.m.
The Hanford House
Vernita Room
802 George Washington Way

Idaho Falls, Idaho

June 2, 7-10 p.m.
Littletree Inn
Teton Room
888 N. Holmes Avenue

Libby, Montana

May 31, 7-10 p.m.
Lincoln County Community College
Memorial Gym
111 E. Lincoln Blvd.

Boise, Idaho

June 3, 3-5 p.m. and 7-10 p.m.
Red Lion Motor Inn Riverside
Liberty Room
9th and Chinden

Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

May 31, 7-10 p.m.
The Coeur d'Alene Resort
Cabin 3

Bend, Oregon

June 8, 7 p.m.
The Riverhouse
3075 N. Highway 97

Kalispell, Montana

June 1, 7-10 p.m.
Outlaw Inn
Winchester Room
1701 Highway 93 South

Seattle, Washington

June 15, 3-5 p.m. and 7-9 p.m.
SeaTac Airport
Small Auditorium
Mezzanine Level

Lewiston, Idaho

June 1, 7-10 p.m.
Lewis-Clark State College
Williams Conference Center
Selway River Room
9th Avenue and 4th Street

Spokane, Washington

June 16, 1 p.m.
Cavanaugh's River Inn
Shoreline B Room
N. 700 Division

Missoula, Montana

June 2, 7-10 p.m.
Village Red Lion Inn
Canyon Room
100 Madison

Portland, Oregon

We expect to hold a Portland hearing,
but times and places have not been set.