

Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Meeting Summary
March 14, 2022
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho

Council Chair Guy Norman brought the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Council Members Jeffery Allen, Doug Grob, Ginny Burdick, KC Golden, Jim Yost, and Mike Milburn were in attendance in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Member Louie Pitt Jr. attended via video call. The next Council meeting is scheduled for April 13, 2022.

Recognition of Council Member KC Golden

Chair Norman began by welcoming the newest Council Member out of Washington, KC Golden. Member Golden has a rich history in energy and policy, and Chair Norman said he'll be a great addition to the Council.

Council Meeting Agenda Items

1. Discussion on Idaho Power Issues

Members of the Executive Committee of the Idaho Consumer-Owned Utilities Association (ICUA) offered their unique perspectives on power issues in the region as well as some constructive criticism of the Council.

Executive Director Will Hart gave an overview of the ICUA. ICUA represents 11 rural electric cooperatives and 10 municipal power companies across the state of Idaho, and 96% of the power they distribute comes from the Bonneville Power Administration. The high priority issues for ICUA are long-term BPA contracts, transmission, the Columbia River Treaty, fish recovery, and protecting the hydrosystem. Hart added that member companies and co-ops are integral, active members of their communities sponsoring school events, sports teams, donating to local charities, awarding scholarships to kids across the state, providing energy audits, and low-income energy assistance. They are members of their Chambers of Commerce, influencers in their communities, and they've sponsored a youth leadership camp called the ICUA Youth Rally since 1987. Hart took time to thank the hundreds of essential utility workers across the state for their tireless work through the pandemic. He expressed that Idaho is one of the fastest growing states in the nation, and that the ICUA looks forward to working with the Council on issues important to the region.

Jim Robbins, President of the ICUA and Board Member of Kootenai Electric Cooperative, expressed that with electric demand in the region projected to double in the next 10-20 years, they have major concerns regarding recommendations in the 2021 Northwest Power Plan and resource adequacy. He cited early coal plant retirements, mandates for increased electrification, and the possible breaching the Lower Snake River Dams (LSRDs) and said

that the Council should be focused on adding resources rather than taking them away. He said that the proposed study to breach the dams does not consider lengthy and expensive process of installing transmission, mainly because the size, number, location, type, and function of replacement resources in the grid is unknown. He believes that if the dams are removed, it will significantly raise the rates of their customers. This would greatly affect people at or below the ALICE index (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed), the poor, lower-middle class, and middle class. Regarding how salmon are affected, he believes that the Council should spend more resources studying the ocean segment of the salmon's lifecycle and also explore reducing harvest. Robbins also mentioned that with other adequacy experts in the northwest questioning the validity of the GENESYS model, there is growing concern among their members of the credibility of the Power Plan. He believes the Council should focus on refining the GENESYS model and not on a scoping study to remove the dams.

Max Beach, General Manager of Idaho County Light & Power, expressed that he hopes everyone involved can help ensure ratepayer fish and wildlife dollars, which make up close to 25% of his members' monthly spend, are used in the most scientific and cost-effective manner. He commended the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program and cited that a lot of money has already been spent, and they're seeing the improvements in fish passage, particularly at the LSRDs (up to 98%). He also commended the respectful cooperation between the four states in tackling power and fish and wildlife issues.

Annie Terracciano, General Manager of Northern Lights Inc., echoed the sentiments of previous presenters and described the growth of their service territory and the entire state of Idaho as intense. Their new service connects grew by 75% last year, and their year-to-year sales were 20% higher this year. The major concerns for her area she mentioned were resource adequacy, high-danger trees near power lines, and fire risk, which is especially high in certain places within their service territory. She said the decisions the Council will make ultimately impacts the Northwest grid for years to come.

Will Hart closed by reiterating that resource adequacy issues are a major concern, and a scoping study of breaching the LSRDs would be duplicative and not a good use of ratepayer dollars. He said they wish to maintain the respectful, open dialogue they have with the Council going forward.

Member Allen asked the group if they have a similar metric to the ALICE index that Robbins described and what the current trends are. Terracciano said that her service territory is very different in that people coming into north Idaho are buying their second homes and those residents are there mostly seasonally. They can afford to pay their utility bills, and a good portion of them are on autopay. Beach said there is no doubt there are people in that category in their territory, and a lot of their members are struggling. Hart said that they did surprisingly well with overages during the pandemic. They had a voluntary no-disconnect policy and continuously worked with their members throughout the pandemic to help them

get to the resources they needed to pay their bills such as community assistance groups.

Robbins voiced his concern regarding wildfires in the region, especially with them having trees that are much taller than their right-of-way lines. He said insurance companies will no longer cover the amount of damage a wildfire can produce, and if a fire did occur in a populated area, it could bankrupt a utility, which is a real danger.

Member Grob echoed concerns and highlighted the difficulty people have paying their utility bills. He said we have to be mindful of people who might be excluded from the system, and that access to electricity is the most important thing on the entire planet.

2. Discussion on Idaho Fish and Wildlife Issues

Ed Schriever, Director of Idaho Fish and Game, provided a general review of the implementation, progress and status of fish and wildlife conservation and management in the region.

Schriever said that conservation programs for grizzly bears and gray wolves have been successful, and IDFG is working with federal partners to move forward on wolverine, Canada lynx, and greater sage-grouse management. Schriever explained that the revenue for their conservation programs does not come from tax dollars, but from the sale of hunting and fishing licenses and tags, and their Price Lock Campaign (annual licensing) has been successful in evening out fluctuations in revenue. They remain fiscally solvent after 5 years of instituting the Price Lock Campaign.

Schriever highlighted successes of the Fish and Wildlife Program at Lake Pend Orielle in kokanee salmon restoration, bull trout and cutthroat trout conservation, and restoring a trophy fishery for bull trout and rainbow trout. He provided an overview of the habitat restoration project that the Clark Fork River Delta, which Council members visited later that day. This is a collaborative effort using Avista dollars and Council Fish and Wildlife Program funding to stop the loss of important delta habitat, recover habitat, and enhance habitat that exists. From 2015 to 2020, 1,000 acres of habitat were protected from further erosion caused by the operation of the Albeni Falls Dam, and 40 acres of island habitat were re-created. Schriever also highlighted other habitat restoration projects in southern Idaho managing over 8,000 acres of habitat. Schriever concluded by highlighting challenges with funding, inflationary pressure on program budgets, and changes in the trade skills market, but they are hopeful that the Recovering America's Wildlife Act will pass Congress which would provide additional funding. They are currently revising the Idaho State Wildlife Action Plan so policy makers clearly understand what they'll be doing to support species of greatest conservation need.

Shawn Young, Director of Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Fish & Wildlife, gave a brief history of events that led to the decline of habitat and native fish and wildlife in the Kootenai Valley. Changes have been occurring for over a century with substantial migration of people from the eastern United States in the early 1900s, the rapid harvesting of the extensive riparian forests, and the building of Libby Dam. The entire Kootenai floodplain in Idaho and British Columbia has been converted to agriculture. This has led to loss of wetlands and river connectivity, elimination and degradation of fish and wildlife habitats, bank erosion and land loss, loss of nutrients to the basin, and endangered fish and wildlife populations. Young listed the Kootenai Tribe Integrated Fish and Wildlife Program activities and programs to offset the alterations to the ecosystem which include:

- Wildlife Mitigation Program
- Kootenai River Habitat Restoration Program
- Kootenai Sturgeon and Burbot Conservation Aquaculture Program
- Nutrient Restoration and Biomonitoring Program
- Kootenai River Operational Loss Assessment and Mitigation Program

Young highlighted successes in white sturgeon and burbot conservation. The Kootenai Tribe have helped to ward off the extinction of sturgeon and have spawned over 500 sturgeon adults and released over 300,000 juveniles of 26 different year classes in Idaho, Montana, and British Columbia river and lake habitats. They've also restored the burbot population through their program spawning and releasing 18 million larvae, 27 million fertilized eggs, and 1.65 million juveniles. According to IDFG estimates, the adult burbot population has increased from about 50 in the early 2000s to about 50,000 in 2020. Young highlighted the community stewardship, landowner collaboration, and international cooperation vital to this work, and emphasized that the future of their program is habitat restoration.

Member Pitt thanked Schriever and Young for their good work and asked how flat line funding is affecting their work. Young said the cost of living and all expenses in the area has gone up, and this has made it difficult to hire local skilled labor.

Member Allen commended both agencies for bringing back fish populations and highlighting other efforts and successes for the Council.

Presentation materials are posted with this summary here:

https://www.nwcouncil.org/media/filer_public/53/8a/538aa34e-f291-4407-9638-b587f640e6f3/2022_03_2.pdf

Chair Norman recessed the meeting for the day at 11:45 a.m.

**Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Meeting Summary
March 15, 2022
Coeur d'Alene, Idaho**

Council Chair Guy Norman brought the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Council Members Jeffery Allen, Doug Grob, Ginny Burdick, KC Golden, Jim Yost, and Mike Milburn were in attendance in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Member Louie Pitt Jr. attended via video call. The next Council meeting is scheduled for April 13, 2022.

Reports from Committees

The Power Committee did not meet, and the Fish and Wildlife Committee were scheduled to meet later in the week.

Public Affairs Committee

Member Pitt, Public Affairs Committee Chair, reported on the Public Affairs Committee meeting held on March 8, 2022.

The Public Affairs Committee discussed the possibility of hosting a Congressional staff visit for 2022 to bridge the gap of information and time lost due to the pandemic. Because of recent retirements and a short planning window, staff recommended that the Council postpone the next Congressional trip until the summer of 2023. The Committee is also recommending that interested Council members and the Executive Director travel to Washington DC and present on the completed Northwest Power Plan and other relevant subjects.

Council Meeting Agenda Items

3. Briefing on Ocean Observations and Outlooks for Salmon Returns

Brian Burke, Supervisory Research Fish Biologist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Northwest Fisheries Science Center, presented research findings and outlooks associated with Chinook and Coho returns to the Columbia River based on indicators of ocean conditions.

Burke reported that last year saw widespread and significant improvement in recent ocean conditions. 2021 was a great year and they expect survival of smolts to be quite high, although variable across the stocks. However, it's important to remember that this isn't the beginning of a general upward trend, but a temporary respite in a long-term decline. They expect that in time the ocean will revert back to poorer conditions. Burke also discussed potential positive carry-over effects from managing habitats in the river and estuary,

predators, prey, and competitor species. These carry-over effects could improve ocean survival, but they are still unsure as to what degree. More information is ultimately needed to better inform the management actions that need to be taken in the marine environment to improve the recovery of these species.

Member Yost commented that he'd never heard a report from a scientist in this committee that had enough information to make a decision, and when they're asked about what the future will be in 2 or 5 years, then answer is about 50%, a coin flip. He asked what the error is on computations of risk. Burke said that is a big part of the science component of this. If you're talking about the short-term estimates, the confidence differs from species to species. In the long-term and when considering climate change, the idea that they're in this temporary respite is not a coin flip, and they are certain that things are sure to get much worse. The issue is what to do about it, and that is where they don't have enough data to be certain about the recommendations.

Member Yost then asked where the majority of funding comes from for the May, June, and September surveys. Burke responded saying that the September survey is no longer funded, but the May and June surveys are about equally funded by BPA and NOAA. The Newport Line survey is funded almost exclusively by NOAA, and the advanced technologies they're using are funded by the US Navy.

Member Allen asked what kind of reception Burke gets from hatchery managers when he talks about altering the way hatcheries are run. Burke said that while he's not a hatchery expert, generally the reception is good, and people want to do the right thing. The issue is that hatcheries are not simple operations to manage and there are economic and biological constraints. He said there is a lot of room for active discussion about how to move forward given the constraints. He believes what we should do is think about this in an experimental way, trying different things and seeing what works because our understanding on how to run hatcheries now is based on understanding and environmental conditions from 20, 30, or 40 years ago. We know a lot more now and the system has changed.

Member Golden expressed appreciation for the fantastic data presentation and said that it was sobering to see the models of long-term expected downward climate trends. He commented that with all of the management options Burke described both in the streams and potentially in the ocean and our ability to make a difference, you can't help but get the feeling that all of those management actions are a steep uphill challenge at best. He said that no amount of clever management actions can overcome those trends if we don't do something different on the energy side. Burke thanked Member Golden and said there are things that can still be done. He emphasized the need to study predation and said we're doing a huge disservice by not studying predators more.

Chair Norman commented that he agrees that ocean research is important and that the Fish and Wildlife Program recognizes it as a priority and that we need to understand what is going on in the ocean to better understand the effectiveness of the projects taking place in

the interior. He asked Burke what the priorities are that are missing without the full funding. Burke said one issue is that they're not studying predators and understanding predators might be the biggest impact they could have for all of the stocks. The other issue, if it becomes a priority, is continuing the September survey to better understand fall Chinook-giving them better estimates of year-class strength.

Presentation materials are posted with this summary here:

https://www.nwcouncil.org/media/filer_public/a8/e5/a8e5f549-417e-4cd8-8a73-cdb1b3448008/2022_03_3.pdf

4. Briefing on Columbia River Basin Salmon and Steelhead Returns for 2021 and Forecasts for 2022

Tim Sippel, Fishery Analyst for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and TAC member, and John Powell, ESA Program Coordinator for Idaho Department of Fish and Game, briefed the Council on the latest information on adult Chinook, coho, sockeye, and chum salmon and steelhead run forecasts for the Columbia River, and expectations for the 2022 fisheries. They also provided a retrospective review of the 2021 adult salmon and steelhead returns and fisheries.

Tim Sippel reported that last year's Columbia River Chinook returns stayed near the 5-year average, but were well below the 10-year average, and the forecast for 2022 is expected to be at least as good or better than 2021. Last's year's return for sockeye was modestly lower than the 5-year average with the forecast for 2022 expected to be slightly above. Sippel explained that sockeye are an extremely variable stock and there are wild swings from year to year which has contributed to the challenges of forecasting this stock. The 2021 abundance data for coho shows marked improvement over 5-year and 10-year averages with an even higher 2022 forecast, but Sippel highlighted that the numbers haven't been finalized yet, and that the coho forecast performance has been declining for the last 10 years and will need to be improved. The returns for steelhead remained near the 5-year average in 2021, but the region is still seeing historic lows in steelhead abundance. The total 2022 forecast for Columbia River Salmonids is about 1.1 million fish, and the total 2022 forecast for upriver salmonids is just under 1 million fish. Overall, in regard to recovery goals they're doing reasonably well in about one-third of cases and have a long way to go for the others. These returns were a mixed bag that provided opportunities for some fisheries, but constrained others due to low returns. Sippel emphasized that the availability and organization of information is an ongoing challenge in the Columbia River. They're working on organizing their information, but there is a lot of work to do to make their information as accessible as possible to do the analyses and track their efforts.

John Powell reported abundance of natural and hatchery-origin summer Chinook, fall Chinook, summer steelhead, and sockeye in the Snake River.

- *Natural-origin spring/summer Chinook* – The 2021 return was 6,556 which was below the forecast of 8,150 and was approximately 52% of the 10-year average. The

2022 forecast is 9,739.

- *Hatchery-origin spring/summer Chinook* – The 2021 return was 29,957 which was above the forecast of 18,783 and was approximately 68% of the 10-year average. The 2022 forecast is 39,631.
- *Natural-origin fall Chinook* – The 2021 return was 7,089 which was just below the forecast of 7,210 and was approximately 65% of the 10-year average. The 2022 forecast is 7,240.
- *Hatchery-origin fall Chinook* – The 2021 return was 24,606 which was above the forecast of 17,500 and was approximately 95% of the 10-year average. The 2022 forecast is 19,205.
- *Natural-origin summer steelhead* – The 2021 return was 8,765 which was below the forecast of 14,450 and was approximately 45% of the 10-year average. The 2022 forecast is 15,380, 1,330 of which are expected to be greater than 78cm in length.
- *Hatchery-origin summer steelhead* – The 2021 return was 31,988 which was below the forecast of 35,470 and was approximately 47% of the 10-year average. The 2022 forecast is 36,040, 9,590 of which are expected to be greater than 78cm in length.
- *Natural-origin sockeye salmon* – The 2021 return was 16 which was below the forecast of 189 and was approximately 10% of the 10-year average. The 2022 forecast is 51.
- *Hatchery-origin sockeye salmon* – The 2021 return was 911 which was above the forecast of 274 and was approximately 166% of the 10-year average. The 2022 forecast is 50.

Member Millburn commented that the last 20 years in most of Powell's slide look better for the fish than the 20 years prior to that and asked why that is. He also asked if they just don't have data prior to 1980 and if they are projecting trends from just the last several years rather than from the last 20 years. Powell said that when they're forecasting how many fish will return, it really depends on the species. For example, when forecasting Chinook, they use the ages of the fish to project the ages of next year's fish, and with steelhead they use recent averages to make forecasts. He said that through time, a lot of work has gone into salmon and steelhead mitigation, and he is optimistic that this past work is reflected in the whole current picture. Council Project Review Implementation Manager Mark Fritsch explained that the low numbers in the 1990s on the sockeye chart are from when the IDFG and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes put that population into preservation/conservation mode, and the higher peaks in the 2000s are the results of the releases, which is a great example of an effort the Program has funded. Chair Norman followed up saying that the dip in the 1990s is what led to the endangered species listing of so many stocks in the Columbia Basin and all of the programs trying to recover them. Norman said that some of the rebounds are certainly associated with the efforts to recover those stocks. We have a variable ocean, and the numbers are getting low again, but it's good that the latest indicators suggest that we have a bit of a rebound.

Chair Norman asked Powell and Sippel to elaborate on the previously stated need to organize data and make it more readily available for forecasts and constructing returns. Powell stated that the situation might be different for the Snake River because they have a lot of data readily available to them. The adult path at Lower Granite Dam allows them to systematically sample throughout the run and break down stocks. Sippel commented that the Columbia River is managed through a lot of partnerships with various sets of data, some on spreadsheets that are passed between organizations which makes it cumbersome to keep track of the information. He suggested that they need to develop data servers that are managed online so there is one reliable and reproduceable source of information that can be used between organizations. They've been developing a data system that is currently online, but it is still incomplete. Generally, he would like to modernize the data management so they can spend less time managing the data and more time analyzing it.

Chair Norman then asked Sippel and Powell to comment on the relationship coordination between these forecasts and NOAAs work developing oceanic indicators of survival. Sippel said that the work NOAA is doing is extremely valuable, particularly the stock-specific ocean indicator data sets. They are currently not integrated into their forecasting methods, not because they don't want to, but because they need to update the way they manage data. Sippel said there is a lot of great value in the research Burke presented and they aim to make the best use of it they can.

Presentation materials are posted with this summary here:

https://www.nwcouncil.org/media/filer_public/21/8e/218ed22d-2be9-4b73-972e-037af2bffdbbe/2022_03_4.pdf

- 5. First Year Implementation Report on Increased Mitigation Efforts in the Blocked Areas Above Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph Dams (POSTPONED TO A FUTURE COUNCIL MEETING)**
- 6. Scope of Work on Potential Lower Snake River Dam Analysis (Replacement Power Options) and Future Power Plan Work**

Ben Kujala, Council Director of Power Planning, and John Ollis, Manager of Planning and Analysis, held a discussion with the Council about the continuing process to develop a scope of work on potential Lower Snake River Dam (LSRD) analysis. Kujala reported that Council staff is still receiving a wide variety of active feedback regarding the scope of work, and there are differing strong opinions in the feedback on whether to proceed with it.

Kujala also explained that the GENESYS model and the 2021 Power Plan explored new ideas for the region, and there are a lot of people who don't think the model has been fully vetted, they aren't comfortable with the outputs that differ from historical information, and/or they don't think the model can be used to do an analysis like this one. Kujala expressed that

he is fully confident in the analysis in the Power Plan and in the analysts that put the information together, and he believes that the plan raises important issues to work on, but he understands that because this Power Plan was very different from previous plans, people want Council staff to demonstrate the Plan's efficacy and use of the models. He said this isn't necessarily a reflection of the model, but the inputs put into it. He acknowledged that there are certainly opportunities to improve these inputs, especially as it relates to the hydrosystem operations and future market dynamics- especially when it comes to policy and how that interacts with renewable portfolio standards and clean energy requirements. Kujala suggested that continuing to work with stakeholders and explaining and demonstrating the efficacy of the model would help stakeholders provide meaningful, contextualized feedback on the proposed scope of work.

Chair Norman agreed and reiterated that stakeholders gaining confidence in the GENESYS model would be critical. Kujala said it would help not just in terms of whether to move forward with the scope of work, but it would also help stakeholders provide feedback on if staff have appropriately captured what the scope of work should be.

Member Yost expressed that it would be helpful to take a breather for a month or so and see what develops. He cited feedback the Council received that had to do with the recommendations included in the Power Plan. In continuing to work with stakeholders, he said that staff should work on explaining the difference between adequacy and reliability, creating a good formula for loss of load probability, and getting them to understand the difference between the old GENESYS model and the new GENESYS model.

Member Grob said that the issue of the scope of work for the LSRDs is the most emotional issue in the region, and if the Council engages with this prematurely, he is concerned that it will erode confidence and respect for the Council.

Member Burdick echoed Member Grob's sentiment that this is a highly emotional and politicized issue on both sides, and she emphasized that the Council is not part of the political process. She said that the Council has a well-deserved reputation for objectivity and technical expertise. She expressed appreciation for the staff's transparency throughout the process, working with stakeholders and considering their feedback. She believes that now is the right time for a study so that people who make decisions can make them on an educated basis. She reiterated that the role of the Council is to provide objective, credible data to help the decision-making process and the Council needs to do a better job of communicating this.

Chair Norman agreed that the Council is tasked with making it clear that any kind of analysis associated with a resource, including the LSRDs, is specifically analytical relying on the expertise of the staff. He said he looks at this proposed study as separate from any policy decision.

Member Millburn asked for clarification on what the next steps are and asked what the scope of work is going to be. He said once the Council talks about the removal of the LSRDs, they'll be perceived as in charge of that debate. Ben made it clear that they would be returning a scope of work and not a product of the analysis, and undertaking the analysis would be at the discretion of the Council.

Chair Norman stated that the Council will wait until April for a progress report on the scope of work. Council staff will take time to demonstrate the GENESYS model with stakeholders and get additional feedback. Chair Norman asked for agreement from Council members to revisit the scope of work in April. The Council agreed.

7. Council Business

Council approval of the February 2022 Council Meeting minutes

Vice-Chair Grob moved that the Council approve for the signature of the Vice-Chair the minutes of the February 16, 2022 Council Meeting held in Portland, Oregon via webinar, as presented by staff.

Member Yost seconded.

No discussion.

Voice vote – all in favor, none opposed.

Motion was approved.

Motion to release the 2021 BPA Fish and Wildlife Cost Report for a 30-day public comment period

Council Director of Public Affairs Mark Walker briefly reviewed the 2021 BPA Fish and Wildlife Cost Report.

Vice-Chair Grob moved that the Council approve the release of the 2021 BPA Fish and Wildlife Cost Report for a 30-day public review and comment period, as presented by staff.

Member Yost seconded.

No discussion.

Voice vote – all in favor, none opposed.

Motion was approved.

Recognition of Mark Walker

Council Members and staff took time to recognize and thank Public Affairs Director Mark Walker as he transitions out of the Council after 26 years. Chair Norman praised his experience and political savvy that helped the Council navigate difficult issues over the years. The group told stories and expressed their appreciation for his humor and unique spirit.

Public Comment

Mark Johnson, General Manager of Flathead Electric Cooperative, stressed the importance of maintaining the LSRDs. On behalf of Flathead's 57,000 members, he asked that the Council vote 'no' on any scoping or analysis related to the LSRDs. He said it would be an unnecessary use of Council resources and duplicative of the work of the BPA, the Army Corp of Engineers, and the Bureau of Reclamation.

Gary Boe, Vice President of the Board of Trustees at Flathead Electric, expressed that he also opposes a scoping of the LSRDs. He highlighted that Flathead has a 92% customer approval rating because they do things like landfill to gas and a community solar project. He said they are a very environmentally conscious group, and they want what is best for the fish, the river, and their customers. The LSRDs are an important component of their organization. He also said that if the dams were removed, it would increase their rates, greatly affecting the poor.

Duane Braaten, President of Flathead Electric Board of Trustees, said that this is an important issue to Flathead's 57,000 members, and any degradation of the hydrosystem would be a violation of their trust. He said he appreciates the mission of the Council to ensure there is an adequate supply of power, even in demanding times. Braaten said he fears the possibility of becoming sympathetic to the vocal minority at the expense of resource adequacy. He asked that the Council accept the EIS that has already been done that supports leaving the dams in place.

Terry Crooks of Flathead Electric Cooperative repeated that the people of the region are environmentally conscious. He warned that we need to be careful with our electricity and not go down the same path the oil industry has gone, sourcing it from Russia. He cited the extreme weather event in Texas and pointed to renewables not filling the need in California. He said the LSRDs are very important, and we need to take care of them. He mentioned that there is a big push for electric vehicles, and if that happens, they'll need more power. He said the LSRDs are vital to the survival of the northwest.

Christina Wyatt of Big Bend Electric also stressed the importance of keeping the LSRDs. She also said that it's great that the new GENESYS model is project by project, but it needs to be vetted and we shouldn't rush into extra analysis. She said the Council should make

sure the resource adequacy is right because the electric cars are coming. New legislation has no gas-powered vehicles in Washington state by 2030. She said that the need for more power is coming, and we don't need to take anything out that is viable and affordable. She closed by reminding the Council that it is ultimately Congress' authority to decide what to do and said she feels it is outside of the Council's scope and objectives.

Charles Robison of Montana Electric Cooperatives Association said that Montana's electric cooperatives are concerned about the loss of generation from the LSRDs, and they're concerned that the proposed study is based on incorrect assumptions. The pre-study assumptions adopted by Council staff already adopt what they believe is an overly optimistic outcome for dam breaching. Montana's electric cooperatives question whether it is feasible to operate the power system without the output of the LSRDs while continuing to meet growing demand. In the scoping document, they did not see an analysis of the regulatory and permitting processes for citing and constructing new generation facilities and the associated transmission infrastructure. Robison said that it is unclear whether the dam breaching study would consider the full 3,500 MW nameplate potential of these dams. They believe this decision should be left to policymakers.

Jasen Bronec, CEO of Inland Power and Light, said that the removal of the LSRDs would come with a significant price to Inland Power members- first, with an unknown price of infrastructure to serve their southernmost members, and second, the financial impact of all members by reducing Inland's share of BPA Tier 1 power. The LSRDs constitute 15-20% of their resources which would be about 15 aMW. That annual increase with the reduction of this resource would cost between \$2.6 million to \$3.3 million annually at a time when they're working to comply with additional regulations under CETA. Resources like the LSRDs are critical to meeting their obligations under CETA. He said that Inland Power strongly opposes the Council using its staff, resources, and therefore public power ratepayer money to conduct a study to remove the LSRDs. They believe that the CRSO EIS is the definitive document on this question and there is no value in duplicating it.

Bob Popham, Vice President of Ravalli Electric Cooperative, said there is no need to do another study when a \$40 million study was just completed. This study would be a great waste of time and dollars. The hydrosystem is carbon free and provides the region reliable, adequate baseload generation. Climate change would not be helped through the large amount of mining needed to obtain rare minerals for alternate green generating and storage facilities. Freight movement on the river is very important to the northwest region and Montana. Moving agricultural products down river is economical and basically carbon free. Hydroelectric generation is still the best option for carbon-free and reliable generation.

Scott Levy, host of bluefish.org, explained why the LSRDs should be removed and attempted to rebut previous commenters. He said that the capacity of the LSRDs has never been 3,500 aMW, and also said that the new GENESYS model would reveal the case to keep the LSRDs as misinformation. He referenced a chart that shows an estimated 150 MM

metric tons of CO2 annual sequestration as a potential from recovering Idaho's forests that would arise from the recovery of salmon and steelhead due to the removal of the LSRDs.

Stacy Schnebel, District 1 Trustee at Flathead Electric, said that members are alarmed at the scoping proposal. It is their view that it is not the role of the Council to do any scoping for the destruction and replacement of any part of the Federal Columbia River Power System. She said that she does not believe the future and ongoing modifications should be at the expense of ratepayers for whom we have designed a brilliant, made-in-America energy system, and they have for the most part paid for it. She does not see the logic of this body spending ratepayer dollars to consider what will be a burdensome potential removal and replacement effort for generation capacity that certainly will cost greater than zero dollars. If it costs more than zero dollars, that is a concern for us. She said she would love to learn about the GENESYS model, but she agrees with Member Grob that a year or 2 would be needed for folks like her in the utility industry to get comfortable with it. She urged the Council not to move ahead with the scoping project.

Tom Iverson, Regional Coordinator for Yakama Nation Fisheries, stated that he'd been asked to speak by the Yakama Nation in support of the Council conducting a narrow analysis on the potential scenarios for replacing power services from removal of the LSRDs. He said that the Council is best situated to provide a balanced evaluation of the potential power impacts of dam removal. They believe the CRSO EIS was incomplete and inadequate, and it did not provide the same analysis that would be provided in this study. He said BPA should not be in the lead in conducting this type of study because the study should be much broader than just impacts to BPA. The Council just finished the 2021 Northwest Power Plan and have the most current data and information to support this type of analysis. A Council analysis, by definition, will be transparent, balanced, and allow public participation to ensure confidence in the results on all sides of the issue. Just like the Power Plan, the Council will not be making energy infrastructure decisions with this analysis. But this analysis will provide very important information that we all need in discussing the eventual political decision of breaching the LSRDs.

Chair Norman thanked Member Yost and Member Allen for hosting the first in-person Council meeting in over 2 years. He also thanked Council staff Chad Madron, Kendra Coles, and Barry Richardson for helping make the first hybrid meeting possible.

Chair Norman adjourned the meeting at 12:34 p.m.

Northwest Power and Conservation Council meeting materials for March 2022 can be found here: <https://www.nwcouncil.org/calendar/council-meeting-march-14-2022/>