2025 ANNUAL REPORT TO CONGRESS

Northwest **Power** and **Conservation** Council

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

I am pleased to share the Council's 2025 Annual Report to Congress.

In January 2025, after careful preparation, we issued a call to the region requesting recommendations and comments to inform the next iteration of our Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program. Responses poured in from state and federal agencies, tribes, utilities, environmental groups, fishing groups, businesses, industry groups, ratepayers, interested members of the public, and more. The Council spent much of the year organizing, reviewing, analyzing, synthesizing, and discussing these comments and recommendations at numerous public Council meetings throughout the year. By December, the Council was excited to release the draft 2026 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program to the region for additional public comment and hearings. The Council deeply values the engagement of the region as we've grappled with important, complex, and challenging questions, and we look forward to continuing to engage through the adoption of the final Program, anticipated in summer of 2026.

The call to the region for recommendations on the Fish and Wildlife Program also formally initiated the power planning process. In 2025, the Council conducted the demand forecasting, market studies, needs assessments, and scenario modeling that will underpin the recommendations put forth in the Ninth Power Plan.

The Council is using innovative strategies in our Fish and Wildlife Program and Ninth Power Plan. In our power planning, we are using state-of-the-art modeling techniques and software, improved forecasting data, and a new ability to focus on distinct geographical regions. The Fish and Wildlife Program has been reorganized to reflect the best available science and current approaches to mitigating and restoring ecosystem function. The Council continues to evolve our approach to resource planning to address emerging trends and the growing and shifting need for energy in the region. This is possible because of the technical expertise, experience, and commitment of the Council's excellent staff.

Finally, the Council's work under the Northwest Power Act emphasizes public engagement and regional collaboration, ensuring that our processes are open, respectful, thoughtful, and thorough. In 2025, we hosted monthly meetings across our four states that were accessible in person and online. In addition to our central office in Portland, meetings were held in Pasco, Washington; Missoula, Montana; Eugene, Oregon; and Donnelly, Idaho. We continue to welcome and encourage the region to join with us in charting a path forward for fish and wildlife mitigation and resource planning.

Mike Milburn, Chair

Council members:

Mike Milburn, Chair
Montana

Thomas (Les) Purce
Vice-Chair, Washington

Jeffery Allen
Idaho

KC Golden
Washington

Douglas Grob
Montana

Margaret Hoffmann
Oregon

Charles F. Sams III
Oregon

Ed Schriever
Idaho

POWER PLANNING

2025 in review

In February 2025, the Council officially commenced work on the Ninth Power Plan. This plan will cover the years 2027-2046. Under the Northwest Power Act, the Council reviews and updates its power plans on roughly five-year cycles. The Council is aiming to release the draft Ninth Plan for public review and comment in summer 2026, and adopt the final version by the end of 2026.

The 9th Northwest Power Plan

Primary components of each power plan include a demand forecast looking two decades ahead, and a cost-effective strategy of the supply- and demand-side resources the region must add to the system. The strategy seeks to mitigate risk in electric power investments, while ensuring the region continues to enjoy an adequate, efficient, economical, and reliable power supply.

Power Division staff spent 2025 engaged in producing the Ninth Plan's demand forecast, analyzing the future availability, costs, attributes, and other aspects for supply- and demand-side resources, setting the thresholds for the Council's multi-metric resource adequacy standards, completing WECC-wide market availability studies, as well as producing a needs assessment, among other work.

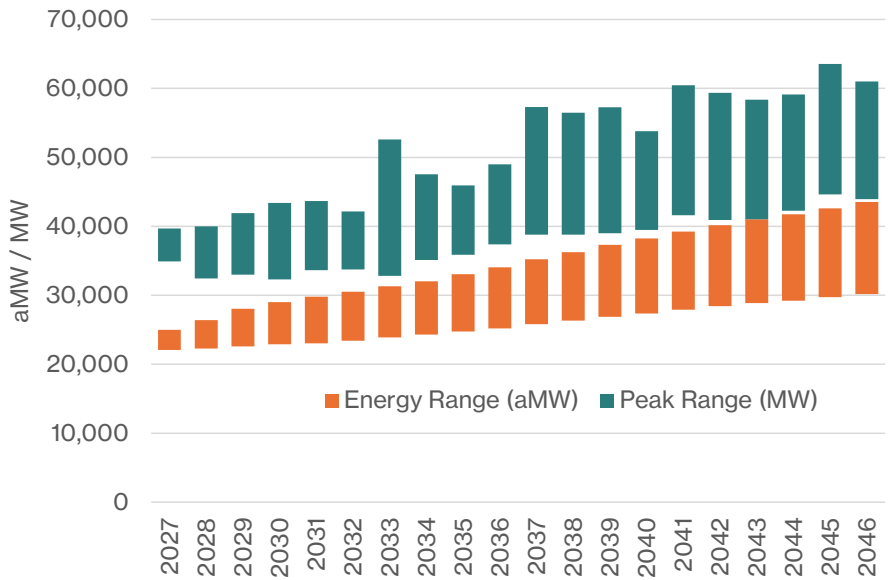
Load forecast

In recent years, the Pacific Northwest's power system has been experiencing a period of significant demand growth. This growth in energy need is expected to continue over the next two decades. However, the ultimate growth pattern could follow several different trajectories, reflecting fundamental uncertainties about how the future could unfold.

In spring 2025, Power Division staff produced a new 20-year load forecast for the Northwest power system for the development of the Ninth Power Plan. This forecast used a new, innovative computer modeling system that the Council implemented in 2023, which allowed staff to analyze hourly levels of energy use, as well as daily, monthly, and annual. This new capability improved staff's analysis of how the system would perform under anticipated future extreme weather events, such as heat waves and winter storms.

The results help to provide a clear understanding of the anticipated need for energy in the region. For annual energy, measured in average megawatts (aMW), the Northwest currently consumes approximately 22,000 aMW. That's forecasted to grow by about 40% on the low end by 2046, reaching 31,000 aMW. On the high end, it doubles to 44,000 aMW.

Forecast Range of Regional Energy (aMW) and Peak (MW) Demand



Forecast pathways

Pathway	What we are testing	Economics	Transportation	Data center	Building electrification	Industrial electrification
P1	Persistent high growth	Medium	Higher	Higher	Higher	Higher
P2	Persistent low growth	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower	Lower
P3	Early growth	Medium	Lower	Higher	Lower	Lower
P4	Late growth	Medium	Higher	Medium	Higher	Higher
P5	Mixed bag	Medium	Higher	Medium	Lower	Lower

For peak need, the Northwest system has recently experienced peaks in summer of 33,300 MW, and 35,500 MW in winter. That's forecasted to grow to 47,000 MW on the low end by 2046, and 60,000 MW on the high end. The average growth rate per year for annual energy ranges between 1.8% - 3.1% from 2027-2046; it ranges between 1.9% - 3% for peak demand over those two decades.

This forecast was informed by five different growth pathways from 2027-2056, testing a mix of economic growth patterns, as well as potential paces for sectors that are expected to be major drivers of growth, such as data centers, transportation, as well as building and industrial electrification.

Resource analysis, adequacy standards, and needs assessment

Power Division staff also analyzed supply- and demand-side resources, which helps test different buildouts of the Northwest power system and find least-cost, least-risk paths to meeting the energy needs identified in the load forecast.

Staff developed reference plants for a wide range of supply-side resources, containing attributes such as capacity, transmission access, or location, as well as estimated financing and costs, among other information. On the demand side, staff produced supply curves for resources such as energy conservation and demand response, which estimated costs and future availability for a multitude of measures spanning sectors such as residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial.

Next, staff set the thresholds for the Council's multi-metric resource adequacy standard. This approach ensures that the final resource strategy protects the system against a range of adequacy risks. The Council adopted this multi-metric standard in 2023. It protects against the frequency of adequacy events, as well as their duration, magnitude, and what month or season that the event could occur in. This innovative standard is a crucial advancement in protecting the adequacy of the Northwest's power supply.

Idaho Council Member Jeff Allen and Power Planning Director Jennifer Light attended the Oct. 2025 Northwest Regional Energy Symposium in Portland. Light (pictured at left) moderated a panel discussion with Oregon Department of Energy Director Janine Benner, Washington State Senator Matt Boehnke, R-Kennewick, and former Washington State Department of Commerce Director Joe Nguyen. Speakers discussed strategies to address energy reliability and regional coordination to enhance resource adequacy in the Northwest.

Finally, staff produced a needs assessment that analyzed what the power system needs to be adequate by 2031, based on a series of future conditions. The main takeaway is that significant needs are seen by 2031; the needs occur across all seasons, but the highest occur in winter. The main driver of needs is the expected load growth. The Council will develop the Ninth Plan's resource strategy and recommendations to ensure that the Northwest's electricity grid has the power supply necessary to meet those future needs.

The Regional Technical Forum: Verifying energy conservation savings in the Pacific Northwest

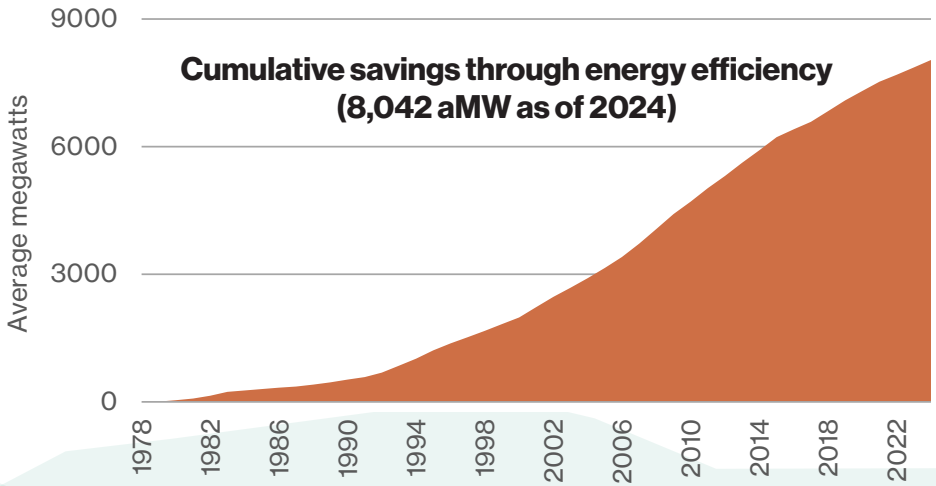
Energy conservation, also known as energy efficiency, is now one of the largest resources on the Northwest's electricity grid. Conservation reduces the demand for electricity by making end-uses more efficient. When Congress passed the NW Power Act in 1980, it made energy conservation a top priority for meeting electricity demand in the Northwest. While analysis has shown energy conservation can be more cost effective than building new generation, it requires rigorous and highly technical analysis to verify savings, costs, and availability.

For example, grid planners can expect that building a new power plant will deliver specific amounts of electricity. Can they trust that they can get precise amounts of savings from energy conservation measures from a particular sector, like residential, commercial, agricultural, or industrial? This is the role and mission of the Regional Technical Forum. Congress authorized the RTF in 1996, and it formed as an advisory committee to the Council and to Bonneville Power Administration in 1999.

The RTF maintains a library with data on savings, lifetime costs, and estimated value to the power system. This library encompasses over 100 energy conservation measures and standard protocols spanning all sectors of the regional economy and facets of daily life, from major cities to small communities. Its scope covers the past several decades, while also looking out decades into the future.

The RTF provides centralized and unbiased technical review for energy conservation savings data and assumptions. The RTF provides a public forum to vet claims, discuss research and analysis, and keep up with changes in a field that is always advancing rapidly as technologies improve, and new ones come to markets. It also tracks and verify data on the progress the Northwest makes each year to acquire energy conservation. Because the RTF maintains this technical resource at the regional level, it achieves tremendous cost savings and benefits for utilities in the Northwest, because they don't have to develop and maintain smaller-scale versions.

These energy conservation savings have had a major impact in the region. As of 2024, the Northwest has saved over 8,000 aMW, which is enough to power seven cities the size of Seattle for a year. That adds up to over $5 billion in savings on energy bills and avoided energy costs. In 2025, the RTF reviewed 15 existing measures, including commercial and industrial fans, voltage optimization, central air conditioners, and connected thermostats. The RTF also identified new opportunities to expand the measure library and refined the methodology for estimating the benefit of resiliency from energy conservation measures.



FISH & WILDLIFE

2025 in review

One of the Council's primary responsibilities under the Northwest Power Act is to mitigate, protect, and enhance fish and wildlife impacted by the hydropower system in the Columbia River Basin. The Council does this through its Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program (Program), created and implemented in partnership with many different entities, including state and federal fish and wildlife agencies, tribes, Bonneville, environmental organizations, landowners, local government, utilities, and more. While the Program is part of the complex tapestry of conservation efforts in the region, it occupies a unique niche. The goals of the Program are broader than recovery for species listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act, as the Council's mitigation responsibilities extend to all fish and wildlife impacted by the hydropower system. While the Council's work pays particular attention to salmon and steelhead, it also includes measures designed to benefit sturgeon, Pacific lamprey, bull trout, cutthroat trout, a variety of wildlife species, and more.

The Council's Program encompasses a large, dependable body of work that has been unfolding in the basin for decades, directing hundreds of millions of dollars a year to restore habitat, purchase and protect wildlife mitigation lands, install fish screens that protect fish from irrigation systems, remove culverts, restore floodplains to their natural course, manage predators and invasive species, put water back in streams, produce fish to support harvest and conservation, and more. The Program has also proposed specific hydropower operations designed to benefit migrating fish. It is the Council's role under the Northwest Power Act to analyze proposed hydropower system changes and develop a subsequent power plan that still ensures adequate, efficient, economical, and reliable power for the region.

Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program

Every five years, the Council requests recommendations from the region on how to best update, or amend, the Program. The process is highly collaborative, visible, and iterative (see adjacent timeline). Based on the recommendations received, the draft Program released in December 2025 identified several priorities, including long-term, consistent hydro operations that will support juvenile migration; maintaining and investing in critical assets like hatcheries and fish screens; improving fish survival by better managing predation rates; and continuing to invest in habitat restoration projects. Public hearing processes in the four-state region occurred in early 2026. Hearings were held throughout the region, including in Bend and Portland, OR, Kalispell, MT, Boise and Lewiston, ID, and Seattle, Spokane, and Yakima, WA. The final 2026 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program is expected to be adopted in summer of 2026.

January 2025

January 2025: Call for recommendations. The first step is a request to the region to submit recommendations for what they would like to see in the next Fish and Wildlife Program.

May 2025: Recommendations received. The Council received thousands of pages of recommendations, comprising hundreds of proposed measures, from 18 individuals and 41 entities, including state and federal agencies, Columbia River Basin tribes, utilities and utility organizations, and environmental and fishing groups.

July 2025: Public comment on recommendations received. The Council received over 1600 comments on the recommendations.

August – December 2025: Analyze, deliberate, debate. The Council met frequently to review, analyze, deliberate, and debate the recommendations that had been received. The Council and staff worked hard to reorganize the 2014/2020 Program into one cohesive document that could be used as a foundation for the next Program.

December 2025: Draft Program released for public comment and hearings. The Council voted to release the draft Program for 75 days of public comment and hearings.

January – February 2026: Nine public hearings were held throughout the Northwest and online.

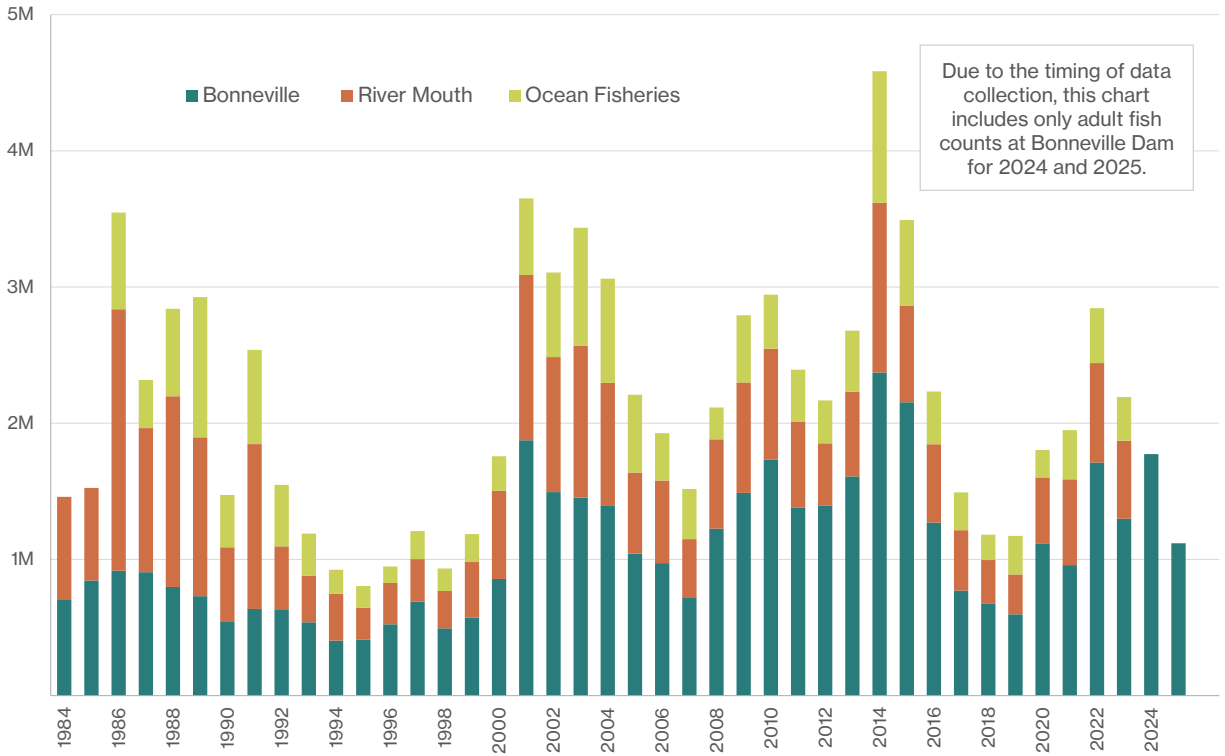
Summer 2026: Final F&W Program adoption

June 2026

Salmon and steelhead returns

The Council provides yearly updates on adult salmon and steelhead returns. Staff and partners across the region collaborate to include data from ocean fisheries and the mouth of the Columbia River in addition to the counts at Bonneville Dam. The Council has a long-standing goal of having 5 million adult salmon and steelhead return to the Columbia Basin annually, with an emphasis on increasing the proportion of salmon and steelhead migrating to areas above Bonneville Dam.

Updated information can be found online at the Council's Program Tracker.



Independent science panels

The Independent Science Advisory Board (ISAB) and the Independent Science Review Panel (ISRP) provide critical scientific review functions that help inform the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. The ISRP reviews individual fish and wildlife projects funded by Bonneville and makes recommendations to the Council.

The ISAB serves the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), Columbia River Indian Tribes, and the Council by providing independent scientific advice and recommendations regarding scientific issues that relate to the respective agencies' fish and wildlife programs.

Each group also publishes well-regarded scientific reports, like the Climate Change Report and Habitat Retrospective Report.

ASK A SCIENTIST!

Oregon State University professor Desirée Tullos, Ph.D., P.E., has been an ISAB member since 2022, and ISRP member from 2015-2021.

Tell us a little bit about your areas of expertise and research interests

My work focuses on the sustainable management of rivers. That involves mostly river hydraulics and river infrastructure, and how that intersects with things that people and society care about. Things like fish, water quality, and the ability of people to use the river for recreation and cultural purposes. I also personally have a deep connection with water. I have a seven-year old son, and we spend a lot of time in and on the water. It's a really satisfying job where I get to work on the science and engineering side, I get to work with students, and help develop a workforce that's inspired and motivated, and also make connections to policy. I feel super grateful that I get to do these things because it's what I care about.

How did you first hear about the Council and the ISAB? What led you to join?

I heard about the Council because of reports they had produced, so I had an awareness of this group of science advisors but I didn't totally understand who they were and what the Council was. Now that I've been involved with the ISRP and ISAB for so long, I have a much clearer sense of the big role that the Council plays. Not just in the Columbia River, but in big picture thinking about reservoir operations and regional planning. Some of the intellectual giants of river science and river management have been on the ISRP and ISAB, and I've gotten to work with some of these people who I really admire as scientists and as contributors to understanding big things. I've really appreciated the opportunity to work with those folks and to work on something that feels important.

Are there any reviews that were particularly challenging or that led to unexpected results?

The one that comes to mind is the most recent one, the Climate Resilience Report, where we did a large number of listening sessions from practitioners, scientists, managers, and regulators. It is really comprehensive and it was a hard story to tell, to try to wrap all these perspectives together. The thing that I feel was perhaps most useful was showing how much we've learned. Often, as scientists, we are inclined to recommend further studies, to keep trying to address remaining uncertainties. However, in that report, we were definitive about the things that we already know are going to help increase the resilience of salmon. Yes, there are still some things that we need to learn more about, but we already have great tools and adequate knowledge. So there are some places where we just need to take action.

Any fun/wild experiences from the field you want to share?

For my river engineering class we've been going down to the Klamath every year. This past year we were one of the first groups to float through the former reservoirs. There's this one 2.5 mile class IV rapid, and all of our boats made it through...except for the one with the faculty and the grad students. We were the last boat, and our boat flipped, and we all swam the last of the rapid. And it was this moment where there was a little bit of panic for a minute, but then it brought us all together in a way that I don't think we could have orchestrated in a classroom or any other experience. Those are moments in people's lives, getting out on rivers, we see rivers and ourselves differently, from a new perspective. And see each other differently. So I think time together on rivers can really change people in ways that it's hard to do any other way.

Anything else we should know about you?

I think the thing I've learned over my career is that the science is actually pretty straightforward, it's the policy and the people parts that are really complicated. And so the extent to which we can create those spaces, like in the ISAB, where we have to listen to each other and understand each other's perspectives, and try to organize those ideas and perspectives, I think that's where the real progress gets made.

IDAHO

Collaborative efforts yield progress and results for Redfish Lake sockeye

Redfish Lake is near the headwaters of the Salmon River, which flows north to meet the Snake River and continues to the Columbia River and eventually the Pacific Ocean. The lake gets its name from the bright red color of the sockeye salmon that spawn in and swims through its waters. These remarkable fish travel over 900 miles and 6,500 feet in elevation to return from the mouth of the Columbia River to Idaho's Sawtooth Valley. Other fish that can be spotted in the area are bull trout, steelhead, and Chinook salmon.

Historically, up to 25,000 sockeye returned annually to spawn in the Stanley Basin's alpine lakes. But a series of impacts from human activity, including commercial overharvest, habitat loss, and dam construction resulted in anadromous sockeye being extirpated from all but Redfish and Alturas lakes. By 1991, the population was listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

This dramatic decline spurred the formation of a broad, multi-agency recovery partnership – led by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), and NOAA Fisheries (NMFS) – with long-term financial and policy support from Bonneville through the Council's Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program.

Hatchery releases, natural spawning, and habitat improvements are restoring productivity in Redfish and Pettit lakes, with Alturas Lake posed for future supplementation. Sockeye of both natural and hatchery origin now return to the Sawtooth Valley annually. Since 2020, returns to the Sawtooth Valley have varied between a low of 151 and a high of 761 fish. In 2022-2023, 41 natural-origin sockeye returned to Pettit Lake, the highest count in over two decades. This included the first PIT-tagged returning adult, confirming life-cycle survival to adulthood in Pettit Lake, where sockeye had been extirpated. Genetic diversity has been preserved through multiple strategies.

Redfish Lake was one of the site visits for the Council's Congressional tour to Sun Valley in August 2025.

Despite these significant milestones, challenges still remain for these iconic fish. Snake River sockeye can face high mortality and physiological stress during upstream migration due to increasing river temperatures in the Columbia, Snake, and Salmon rivers. During high-temperature years, adult sockeye are intercepted at Lower Granite Dam and trucked to Eagle Fish Hatchery to incorporate into the sockeye captive broodstock or are released to natal lakes, ensuring some fish survive the final leg of migration. Lake productivity, predation, and ocean conditions are also concerns.

The Snake River Sockeye Salmon recovery program is one of the most collaborative and scientifically complex Endangered Species Act efforts in the Pacific Northwest. With leadership from IDFG, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, NMFS, BPA, and the Council, this program has shifted the narrative from near-extinction to cautious optimism. The integration of captive broodstock programs, hatchery releases, lake management, and temperature mitigation strategies is building the foundation for long-term recovery of this iconic species.

Idaho prepares for growth in population, jobs, and the economy

One tried-and-true way to measure economic growth is by counting construction cranes. By that metric, southwest Idaho's Treasure Valley has been booming in recent years.

Other data confirms this trend and points to strong job and population growth statewide, although the majority is concentrated in the Treasure Valley. In 2025, Idaho again led the nation in total nonfarm job growth at 1.53%, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data. The state ranked second in the nation for population growth, trailing only South Carolina, as 36 out of Idaho's 44 counties experienced population growth last year.

Tech sector growth related to data centers, chip fabrication, and artificial intelligence is helping drive some of this economic activity, including for construction and electrical trade workers. In June 2025, Micron Technologies announced a historic investment of $200 billion to construct new and expanded manufacturing facilities in Idaho, New York, and Virginia. In Idaho, Micron's plans include two leading-edge high-volume semiconductor fabrication plants that are expected to result in over 17,000 new jobs. This project is among several related to the tech sector that have located in the Treasure Valley, including a new data center by Meta.

Idaho's population has almost doubled since 2000, and the regional power system has accommodated the accompanying growth in energy consumption while achieving power prices in the state that have consistently been among the lowest in the U.S. From a regional lens, the Council's resource planning has played a role in supporting Idaho's growth over the past 20 years. The Council looks forward to working collaboratively with the region and our partners in Idaho to ensure this system-planning success story continues over the next two decades.

Construction on Micron's new semiconductor fabrication facilities in Boise was progressing in 2025 and had already hit key milestones. Image credit: Micron.

MONTANA

Preserving cutthroat trout in Liberty Creek

The construction of Hungry Horse Dam resulted in the loss of over 75 miles of trout habitat in the South Fork of the Flathead River and its tributaries. This, in combination with other hydropower development and the introduction of non-native species, caused large-scale declines for species like bull trout and cutthroat trout. Bull trout are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, and Westslope cutthroat trout have been petitioned for listing.

The Jocko drainage in western Montana supports the largest remaining migratory population of riverine Westslope cutthroat trout on the Flathead Indian Reservation, homeland of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). The upper drainage contains interconnected spawning and rearing habitat above a recently reconstructed irrigation diversion that allows for selective passage of native bull trout and Westslope cutthroat trout, while preventing upstream movement of introduced species like brown and rainbow trout.

Several years ago, an introduced rainbow trout population was discovered in Liberty Creek, a tributary to the South Fork Jocko River located within the South Fork Jocko Primitive Area. The rugged terrain, remote setting, and culturally sensitive location made removing the introduced fish a significant challenge, both technically and logistically. After getting approval from the CSKT Tribal Council, who agreed that it was important for native fish to belong and persist in the area, the CSKT Fisheries Program formed a partnership with Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) to collaborate on implementation.

"This project is a big win for native resident fish in the Jocko watershed and an important example of Tribal and state partnerships advancing mitigation and recovery actions in the Council's Fish and Wildlife Program."

– Craig Barfoot, CSKT Fisheries Program Manager

Aerial view of Liberty Creek. Photo by Craig Barfoot.

Working together, MFWP and CSKT successfully completed the multi-year project with a second piscicide treatment conducted in fall 2025. The next and final phase will involve reintroducing nearby wild Westslope cutthroat trout to repopulate Liberty Creek over the next several years.

Montana co-ops address load growth, resource planning

Thanks to remote work opportunities and increased interest in the Montana lifestyle, more people are moving into the Missoula and Kalispell areas, among other hotbeds of population growth in the Big Sky Country. Montana ranked eighth in the nation for in-migration of new residents from 2020-2025, at 5.9% or over 64,000 people, according to the Montana Department of Labor & Industry. Most of that growth has been concentrated in the western part of the state, resulting in higher peak loads and more energy consumption in service territories of electric co-operatives serving rural communities in these areas.

At the Council's June 2025 meeting in Missoula, leaders from Missoula Electric Cooperative and Ravalli Electric Co-op, which serves 12,000 customers in the Bitterroot Valley, gave a presentation. MEC's peak load was 57.1 MW in 2021, which grew to 71.6 MW in 2024, although it tapered off in 2025. From 2011-2019, MEC's load was relatively flat and was able to stay just below historically more affordable allocation of Tier 1 power purchased from Bonneville Power Administration. The new growth has outpaced that. Reliance on Tier 2 power from BPA will continue as loads continue to grow.

MEC, Ravalli, and other co-operatives have been crafting resource plans to meet these growing needs and augment the BPA system, as well as joining PNGC Power, which represents 25 electric cooperatives across Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington. The Council's Ninth Power Plan will aim to complement this resource planning over the next five years. The Council's power plans offer a cost-effective strategy and regional-level insights for meeting energy demand in rural as well as urban areas of the Northwest.

The Bitterroot River flows through communities surrounding Missoula in northwestern Montana

The Council recently upgraded its computer modeling capabilities to analyze future load growth in the Northwest, and to evaluate resource solutions. This includes a deeper understanding of future energy needs that gets down to hourly, daily, monthly, and annual levels of demand across the next 20 years, including checking how the power system would perform during a future heatwave or winter storm and analyzing precisely what it needs during those moments of peak demand. The Council can also now break out energy demand and resource planning by zones, to better differentiate between the future energy needs of urban areas and those of rural communities.

OREGON

Large-scale projects on McKenzie River showcase innovation and collaboration

The McKenzie River is a primary tributary of the Willamette River. The McKenzie carries cold, clear waters west about 90 miles to where it joins the Willamette near Eugene, Oregon. During the late summer months, it can contribute up to 30% of the Willamette's cool water, which is critical for fish populations throughout the Willamette Basin. Like many other rivers, the McKenzie was heavily channelized during development of the region.

The Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP) was established in 2010 through a memorandum of understanding between the State of Oregon and Bonneville Power Administration, managed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and guided by the Council's 2009 Fish and Wildlife Program. A variety of habitat restoration projects have been implemented both before and under the WWMP in the Willamette Basin, including along the McKenzie River, to protect and restore floodplain and riparian habitat.

Before the September 2025 meeting in Eugene, Council members and staff toured the Finn Rock Reach (pictured) and Quartz Creek restoration sites with representatives from the McKenzie Watershed Council, McKenzie River Trust, Eugene Water and Electric Board, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the U.S. Forest Service.

The local utility, the Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB), delivers water and electricity to nearly 200,000 people in the area. EWEB invests in multiple ways to protect the river, including developing a hazardous spills response program, conservation incentives for local landowners, and river restoration projects.

About a decade ago, the USDA Forest Service started looking at a larger scale intervention model they call "stage zero restoration," where a heavily channelized river is returned to a more natural depositional valley model. This helps restore fish and wildlife habitat, improve water quality and retention, and reduce flood impacts. EWEB, the USDA Forest Service, the McKenzie River Trust (MRT), and the McKenzie Watershed Council have applied this floodplain restoration approach to nearly a dozen projects with the collaboration of multiple agencies, partners, and funders, including the Council.

On the recently completed Quartz Creek Ecosystem Resilience Project, MRT acquired 278 acres of land in lower Quartz Creek in 2014 and 2015. EWEB worked with Campbell Global, land manager for the landowner Franklin-Clarkson Timber Co. LLC, to secure a 50-year stewardship easement on 82 acres upstream of the MRT property. The USDA Forest Service and BLM also manage land in the watershed. Limited human infrastructure in the area meant that large-scale restoration efforts could take place with minimal disruption to surrounding communities.

Large river restoration projects can also help promote wildfire resiliency. During the 2020 Holiday Farm Fire that burned over 170,000 acres of the McKenzie watershed, restoration partners found that restored floodplains, which were wider, wetter, and more humid, acted as natural fire breaks and provided bases for firefighting operations and refugia for fish and wildlife. Additional

benefits of these projects include moderating water temperatures, providing habitat for fish and wildlife, protecting drinking water by allowing sediment and toxins to filter out of the water, and mitigating flooding. Long-term monitoring and evaluation will be needed to more fully understand the impacts of these projects over time.

After the Holiday Farm Fire, EWEB found that in addition to working directly with landowners on restoration projects to improve erosion control and protect drinking water, ratepayers were willing to pay a surcharge to acquire, restore, and protect land along the river.

“One of the things that is really beautiful about Oregon is it doesn’t matter where you are in this state, everybody cares about the outdoors,” said Susan Fricke, Water Resources Supervisor with EWEB, who presented to the Council at the September meeting and helped lead the tour.

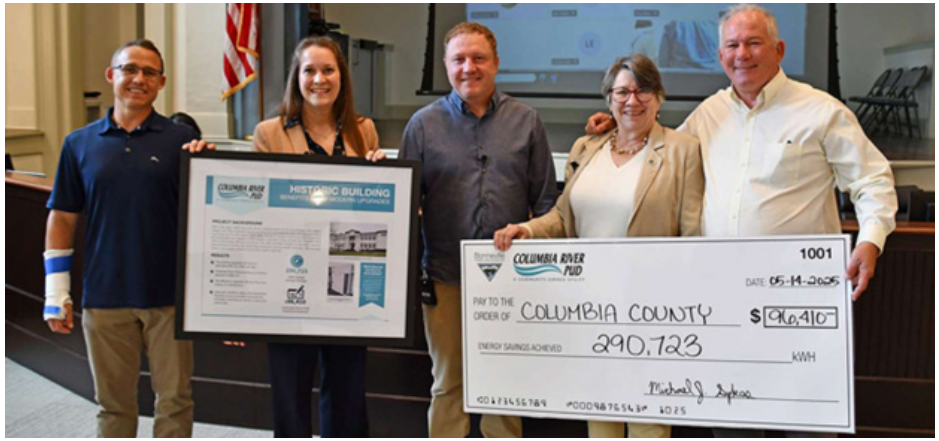
Energy conservation successes continue to advance in communities across Oregon

With the passage of the Northwest Power Act in 1980, Congress made energy conservation a top priority resource for planning the future of the Pacific Northwest’s electricity system. Here’s a look at three recent energy conservation success stories from communities throughout Oregon.

Lincoln County

Recently, Central Lincoln People’s Utility District on the Oregon Coast added a new transmission line near the city of Newport that provides a parallel path on its 69-kilovolt network. The new path improves voltage stability and power flows, resulting in approximately 118,000 kilowatt-hours of annual energy savings.

As electricity travels from where it’s generated, some energy is inevitably lost across transmission and distribution lines until it reaches the end use consumer. Central Lincoln PUD leveraged funding from BPA’s Energy Conservation program to add a new transmission line to their network. Providing a parallel path for energy to travel helped reduce congestion across the PUD’s transmission network, ultimately delivering power more efficiently to customers.



Representatives from Columbia River PUD and the county government celebrate an energy conservation upgrade to a historic building in St. Helens, Oregon.

St. Helens

Built in the early 1900s, the John Gumm building served as the community schoolhouse in St. Helens throughout the 20th century. In 1999, Columbia County purchased and remodeled the building into a civic office. Columbia County worked with Columbia River PUD to find energy conservation incentives to upgrade the historic building. The utility identified a variety of upgrades that qualified for incentives, including high performance windows, lighting retrofits, insulation, heat recovery system, and variable refrigerant flow HVAC system upgrades. The building upgrades will save an estimated 290,723 kWh annually.

Boardman

Umatilla Electric Cooperative (UEC) recently partnered with Boardman Foods to increase its manufacturing efficiencies while maximizing energy savings. The project helped the Central Oregon-based vegetable producer save over 800,000 kilowatt-hours annually – equivalent to the energy use of over 650 UEC residential homes for a month.

WASHINGTON

Mussel-sniffing dog helps prevent spread of aquatic invasive species

Invasive freshwater mussels – quagga, zebra, and now golden – pose a significant threat to the ecosystems and economy of the Columbia River Basin. Should they take hold, they could cause hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to the environment, infrastructure, public health, and recreation. The state of Washington has developed extensive protocols to prevent these species from sneaking in, in part by inspecting watercraft ranging from motorboats to kayaks and paddleboards as they move from one point to another. But with more than 61,000 boats inspected in 2024, the task can seem daunting.

Enter Fin, Washington's invasive mussel-detecting canine.

Fin's job is to sniff out any stowaways on board watercraft and other conveyances going through inspection, a skill he enthusiastically demonstrated at the May 2025 Council meeting in Pasco, Washington (see video). And, with his 200 million sensory neurons activated, he can inspect a boat in a fraction of the time it would take a human. In addition to his inspecting duties, Fin plays an important role in educating the public about aquatic invasive species.

Quagga mussel infestation display.

"It's really important that we get the word out there about how devastating this can be to ecosystems, to economies, if they get into the state. And Fin is great at that. We do a lot of education and outreach with him," said Fin's handler, Nick Knauss, an Aquatic Invasive Species Canine Handler and Inspector at the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Fin is a rescue dog from Texas who was originally slated to work with the Wounded Warriors program. He turned out to be too energetic for that assignment but is winning praise (and treats) as a mussel-detecting dog for Washington.

And the best part of working with mussel-detecting dogs?

"They're a lot of fun. You get to have your best friend with you all day."

Demand response efforts take off in Washington

The Council's 2021 Power Plan identified demand response as a key part of its resource strategy. The plan recommended the region acquire demand response that is low cost, frequently deployable, and with minimal customer impact. Two types were identified and provided specific targets – 200 MW of Residential Time-of-Use and 520 MW of Demand Voltage Reduction. Beginning in 2023, Power Division staff started working with members of the Council's Demand Response Advisory Committee to conduct a regional survey of utilities' demand response efforts and progress.

Utilities across the four-state region reported progress via staff surveys, called demand-response round-ups. The survey found that Idaho Power, Rocky Mountain Power, Flathead Electric Co-Operative, Portland General, PacifiCorp, Clark PUD, Avista, Seattle City Light and Puget Sound Energy had collectively acquired 958 MW in peak demand savings capacity as of 2025.

Seattle City Light was a regional leader in adopting demand response programs in the commercial and industrial sectors in 2025, according to a regional survey conducted by Council staff.

The survey also reviewed regional demand response targets set over the next decade. It found that primary drivers for these targets include integrated resource plans and the Clean Energy Implementation Plans required under Washington state's Clean Energy Transformation Act. PGE is targeting 25% of peak demand met by distributed resources by 2030, and Idaho Power is looking to add 10 MW by 2029.

Washington state utilities are also helping to lead these efforts. Clark PUD is targeting 11 MW by 2029, Snohomish PUD is seeking 27 MW by 2029 and 56 MW by 2035, Avista aims to add 55 MW by 2029, and Seattle City Light is targeting 12 MW by 2029. Puget Sound Energy has plans to achieve annual demand response capacity that will be equal to 10% of its peak demand by 2027, while aiming to acquire 500 MW in the next 3-5 years.

Utilities reported a series of factors explaining greater adoption of demand response in the Pacific Northwest. These factors included load growth and capacity retirements, market price volatility, transmission and distribution congestion, policy, deriving more benefit from the existing system, and supporting ancillary services such as frequency response and contingency reserves.

The survey identified other trends involving demand response in the region:

- While most demand-response capacity is being acquired by larger, investor-owned utilities, smaller utilities are beginning to invest more in demand-response infrastructure and products.
- Utilities are starting to invest in vehicle-to-grid pilots that explore how to use electric vehicles to support grid needs. Electric vehicle adoption is expected to grow at a faster pace in western Washington as well as in western Oregon.
- Utilities are analyzing operational flexibility potential in data centers.

Vancouver

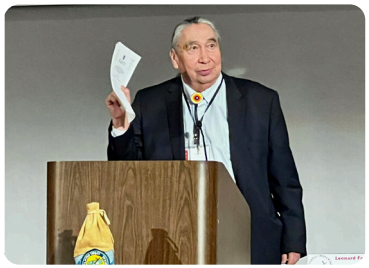
Seattle

Washingt

Portland

Idaho

Portland, Oregon



January: Louie Pitt, Jr., former Oregon Council Member, at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians' winter conference in Portland. His term concluded in February 2025.

Tri-Cities, Washington

May: Council members and staff tour the Columbia Generating Station nuclear power plant.

Kalispell, Montana

July: Flathead Electric GM/CEO Mark Johnson, Council Member Doug Grob, Council Chair Mike Milburn, Montana Gov. Greg Gianforte, and former BPA Administrator John Hairston attend the first-ever Western Montana Public Power Forum.

Richland, Washington

May: Council members toured the Bateman Island causeway removal project, near the confluence of the Yakima River and the Columbia. This stretch of the delta flows free for the first time in 86 years.

Galena Summit, Idaho

August: A group photo at Galena Summit looking out on the Sawtooth Valley. Tour participants included Congressional staff from across the Northwest.

Bonneville Dam

April: Council Chair Mike Milburn and Idaho Fish and Wildlife Policy Analyst Windy Schoby at Bonneville Dam during spring spill.

2025 REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

ADMINISTRATION & BUDGET

The Bonneville Power Administration funds the Council as prescribed in the Northwest Power Act (the Act). Funding does not come from annual federal appropriations or from state governments. The Act established a funding mechanism for the Council based on an estimate of Bonneville's forecast annual firm-power sales.

The Council's budget is $12.9M for FY 2026 (revised). The Council has been a good steward of ratepayer money, consistently managing its budget below the rate of inflation. However, due to reasons not originally envisioned in the Act, the Council's budget was projected to exceed its statutory funding formula level by FY2027. The Council, Bonneville, and congressional staff have worked together for many years to find a solution. In January 2026, an inflation adjustment provision was added to the formula that will help ensure the Council can continue to perform its critical responsibilities in the years ahead. The Council is deeply grateful for the continued strong bipartisan support from the Pacific Northwest Congressional delegation and its recognition of the important role the Council plays in the region.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Public engagement is a fundamental part of the Council's work, ensuring regional collaboration and transparent decision-making. The Northwest Power Act directs the Council to consult with diverse groups across the region, including states, tribes, federal agencies, local governments, electricity customers, utilities, environmental organizations, users of the Columbia River system, and more. Council meetings are open to the public, and held both online and in-person throughout the region.

The importance of public participation has been especially apparent during the development of the draft 2026 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program and Ninth Power Plan. Dozens of entities and hundreds of members of the public offered recommendations and comments to help shape the Fish and Wildlife Program. Multiple technical advisory committees, representing a broad range of regional and national expertise, meet regularly with the Council's power staff to offer feedback and adjust scoping and planning for development of the Ninth Plan. Public hearings will be held throughout the region in 2026 for both the Fish and Wildlife Program and Ninth Plan. More information and ways to connect can be found at the Council's website nwcouncil.org. You can also sign up for our monthly Spotlight newsletter, and follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram (all are @nwcouncil).

The Public Affairs division also keeps the Northwest Congressional delegation and staff updated on the Council's process and accomplishments. Towards this end, the Council hosts Congressional staff members in the Columbia River Basin every other year. The 2025 tour was hosted in Sun Valley, Idaho, with site visits in the Sawtooth Valley to see the Fish and Wildlife Program's work benefiting endangered sockeye salmon at Redfish Lake, and in the Boise area to see a new solar energy project and construction at the Micron Technology campus.

Vernon Smartlowit (Yakama), Fishery Technician with the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, gave a tour of the Pacific lamprey translocation facilities at Bonneville to Council staff including Public Affairs intern Jasmine McIntosh.

This annual report was submitted to the:

Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate

Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives

Committee on Natural Resources
United States House of Representatives

Cover photo: Lake McDonald in Glacier National Park, Montana

The Northwest Power and Conservation Council was established pursuant to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (Public Law 96-501) by the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. The Act authorized the Council to serve as a comprehensive planning agency for energy policy and fish and wildlife policy in the Columbia River Basin and to inform the public about energy and fish and wildlife issues and involve the public in decision-making.

This annual report has been developed pursuant to Section 4(h)(12)(A) of the Northwest Power Act. The Council's bylaws, which include its organizational structure, practices, and procedures, are available at nwcouncil.org/about/policies/bylaws.

See this report at nwcouncil.org/reports/2026-2, posted online for 90-day comment.