

BPA shares new collection of historical films

Free DVD of films from 1950s, '60s, '70s and '80s now available

Portland, Ore. – The Bonneville Power Administration is sharing a new collection of movies about the history of energy in the Northwest. “[BPA Film Collection, Volume Two, 1950-1987](#),” features five BPA-produced films from the 1950s, '60s, '70s and '80s, plus two bonus films.

BPA is offering a free DVD of the films. To receive a copy, contact the BPA Library and Visitor Center at 800-622-4520 or visitorcenter@bpa.gov. You can view, share and learn more about the seven films at www.bpa.gov/goto/films.

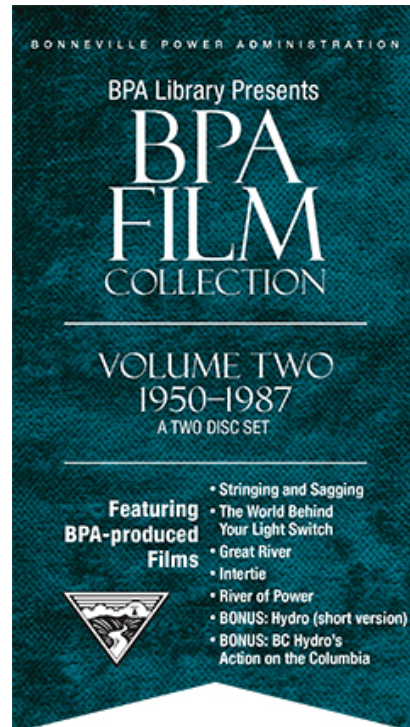
After promoting the development of the Federal Columbia River Power System and the concept of public power in its earlier films, BPA began telling stories about the challenges and successes of operating the Northwest power grid, and educating the public about the many benefits of its low-cost electricity.

“This chapter of BPA films showcases the innovation and expertise behind designing, operating and maintaining the Northwest power system. And a lot of that equipment is still in use today,” says BPA librarian Kaye Silver.

The collection is a highly-anticipated follow-up to “[BPA Film Collection, Volume One, 1939-1954](#),” the first group of films from BPA’s archives. Since its release last year, BPA has distributed about 3,000 copies to electric utilities, libraries, museums and individuals throughout the Northwest, every corner of the country and beyond. Requests came from as far away as Scotland.

“The first volume was a historian’s delight and volume two proves to be just as fascinating,” says Laurence Cotton, who specializes in regional history and guides history-themed cruises on the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

The collection opens with “[Stringing and Sagging a High-Voltage Transmission Line](#)” (1950), a richly detailed film about power engineering that uses animation, tower models and field footage to show how Bonneville built the largest long-distance transmission system of its kind in the nation. The next BPA movie, “[The World Behind Your Light Switch](#)” (1966), explains the thousands of uses of electricity and shows crews repairing power lines in bad weather. It includes footage of the first repair of the underwater cable



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-serving the San Juan Islands, the laying of which was depicted in a 1952 BPA film called “[25,000 Volts Under the Sea](#),” part of the first collection.

In 1963, BPA and the Bureau of Reclamation co-produced “[Great River](#),” which covers many aspects of delivering electricity and water to the people of the Northwest. A decade later, it was re-released with a new beginning and ending by Portland-area newscaster Ted Bryant. The 1973 version is included in the set.

The final two BPA-produced films in the collection won numerous awards. “[Intertie](#)” (1969) showcases the construction of the Pacific Northwest-Pacific Southwest Direct Current Intertie, a high-voltage electric superhighway that helps the two regions balance power needs in the West and share surplus electricity. It features spectacular aerial footage, bluegrass music and time-lapse construction of the Celilo Converter Station, the line’s northern terminus in The Dalles, Ore.

Made for Bonneville’s 50th anniversary in 1987, “[River of Power](#)” is the most comprehensive BPA film. It looks at the geology of the Columbia River Basin and the development of the river, incorporating footage from earlier BPA films. It also features alternate recordings of some of the Columbia River songs written by [Woody Guthrie](#) for BPA in 1941.

There are two bonus films in the collection. “[Action on the Columbia](#)” (1964) captures the Canadian perspective on the Columbia River Treaty, the international agreement between Canada and the United States that guides the management of water resources and helps prevent major floods. It features spectacular aerial views of the upper Columbia River in British Columbia before the dams went in. With permission of BC Hydro, this film is included in the collection in honor of the 50th anniversary of the treaty.

The collection closes with a rediscovered version of BPA’s first film, “[Hydro](#).” Vice President Henry Wallace took this shorter version of the 1939 film on a goodwill visit to Russia, Mongolia and China in the spring of 1944. BPA writer-producer Stephen Kahn also screened this version for audiences in New York City. Until recently there was no copy of it in BPA’s archives. But last spring, a BPA electrical engineer bought a 16-millimeter reel from an antique store in Vancouver, Wash., which turned out to be the lost international version of “Hydro.”

For more information or to host a screening of the films, contact BPA librarian [Libby Burke](#), who curated the collection. Transcripts of the films are also available.

About BPA

The Bonneville Power Administration, headquartered in Portland, Ore., is a nonprofit federal power marketer that sells wholesale- electricity from 31 federal dams and one nuclear plant to 142 Northwest electric utilities, serving millions of consumers and businesses in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, western Montana and parts of California, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming. BPA delivers power via more than 15,000 circuit miles of lines and 259 substations to 490 transmission customers. In all, BPA markets about a third of the electricity consumed in the Northwest and operates three-quarters of the region’s high-voltage transmission grid. BPA also funds one of the largest fish and wildlife programs in the world, and, with its partners, pursues cost-effective energy savings and operational solutions that help maintain affordable, reliable and carbon-free electric power for the Northwest. www.bpa.gov