



Fact Sheet

July 2013

BPA works with willing sellers to secure habitat for fish and wildlife

Since 1980, the agency has protected more than 550,000 acres of land throughout the Columbia River Basin.

For more than 75 years, the Bonneville Power Administration has delivered reliable and clean energy to the Pacific Northwest, mostly from hydropower generated at federal dams on the Columbia River and its tributaries. This low-cost, carbon-free hydropower has benefited both the region and nation, but hydropower development has come at a cost to a complex ecosystem.

The construction and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System impacts fish and wildlife populations throughout the Columbia River Basin. Dams created reservoirs that inundated high-quality habitat for wildlife and dramatically changed the natural conditions of waterways and adjacent lands. In some cases, dams blocked access to habitat once used by various fish species such as salmon, steelhead, bull trout and sturgeon.

The federal agencies that manage the multi-purpose hydropower system — the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and BPA — are responsible for protecting and mitigating for the fish and wildlife habitat affected by the dams. This commitment addresses past harm to the environment as well as minimizing any effects from continued operation of the system.

One tool that BPA uses to meet these goals is acquiring land throughout the basin from willing sellers to protect and rehabilitate habitat to benefit fish and wildlife.

The program targets land acquisitions that:

- Protect habitats that support critical fish and wildlife species
- Enhance natural ecosystem function and species diversity
- When possible, integrate water transactions for permanent protection of in-stream flows
- Have willing and capable project sponsors
- Are consistent with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program and other regional plans.

Land purchases only occur with willing sellers. BPA typically funds the purchase of the property at fair market value for a project sponsor, who will then own and manage the property. Sponsors grant BPA the right to ensure that the habitat, and any associated water rights, will always be protected for the fish and wildlife that depend on it. In most cases, this is done through conservation easements.

WHAT IS BPA?

BPA is a nonprofit federal agency founded in 1937 that markets renewable hydropower at cost from federal dams in the Columbia River Basin, operates three-quarters of high-voltage transmission lines in the Northwest, and funds one of the largest fish and wildlife mitigation programs in the world.





In December of 2011, BPA worked with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks to purchase a conservation easement on 4,477 acres in Swan Valley in northwestern Montana. The conservation easement helped a variety of species, including bull trout, grizzly bears, gray wolves and Canada lynx.

The project sponsors pay any legally required costs associated with the property, including property taxes. However, some properties may be exempt from taxation. In those instances, the sponsor may choose to make payments to local government in lieu of taxes.

Among BPA's project sponsors are Native American tribes, state resource management agencies, cities, conservation and irrigation districts, private land trusts and other conservation organizations. These groups have a vested interest in both the conservation and improvement of habitat in the Columbia River Basin.

Typically, within 18 months of purchase, project sponsors develop a land management plan that is available for public review and input. These plans are designed to protect and enhance the habitat for the benefit of fish and wildlife. Activities that could reduce the habitat benefits to fish and wildlife, such as logging, haying,

livestock grazing or new building construction, are generally limited and managed carefully to ensure fish and wildlife benefits are sustained or improved. BPA reviews the plan for its consistency with best management practices to protect the habitat and comply with any underlying agreement or easement. BPA takes into consideration the elements of the management plan to determine any future funding priorities.

Land conservation and ecological management not only benefit fish and wildlife populations through the preservation and promotion of healthy habitat, they also provide other benefits to local communities and future generations such as cultural, recreational, educational, historical, aesthetic and scientific values. Habitat restoration provides jobs and economic stimulus to nearby communities.

WHY DOES BPA MITIGATE FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE?

In 1980, Congress passed the Northwest Power Act. Under the Act, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council helps set objectives and strategies to protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat through the development of the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Program. BPA funds fish and wildlife mitigation consistent with the Council's program. Working with the Council, BPA has protected more than 550,000 acres of land throughout the Columbia River Basin. BPA's electricity ratepayers have invested more than \$2.85 billion in fish and wildlife mitigation, including land acquisitions, during that period to help meet requirements under the Northwest Power Act and the Endangered Species Act.

For more information, visit www.efw.bpa.gov/IntegratedFWP/wildlife.aspx.