

BPA and BC Hydro seek new long-term water storage agreement

Mica Dam in Canada providing five million acre-feet of non-Treaty storage benefiting power and fish.

The Bonneville Power Administration and BC Hydro are pursuing a new long-term agreement to use additional reservoir storage on the upper Columbia River in Canada to provide safer flows for protected fish and support power generation. Such an agreement would also provide flexibility to control river flows during high runoff periods. This flexibility could help manage power generation and spill to protect fish.

The federal plan for protecting threatened and endangered Snake and Columbia river salmon calls for BPA to pursue such an agreement for additional water storage in Canada. BPA and BC Hydro have developed nonbinding terms and will attempt to negotiate a long-term agreement consistent with these terms. BPA will hold open-house meetings in late May and early June to explain the terms.

Canadian authorities constructed Mica Dam in the 1970s to provide seven million acre feet of water storage as outlined in the Columbia River Treaty of 1964, plus another five million acre-feet, termed non-Treaty storage. BPA and BC Hydro have stored water in the non-Treaty space under a series of long and short term agreements since 1977. Absent an agreement, BPA has no ability to use non-Treaty storage space.

"This is an important step toward implementing one of our key commitments to address salmon restoration," said Steve Wright, BPA administrator. "Completing these negotiations and getting a signed long-term agreement this fall will help preserve the value of this storage for years to come."

The proposed terms would benefit threatened and endangered fish by providing flexibility for BPA to store excess water in the spring and then release that water in the summer when Columbia River flows are low. In the driest water conditions, the proposed terms also would allow BPA to release up to 500,000 acre-feet of additional water in the spring for fish. This water would be in addition to the water provided under the Treaty. The proposal would also provide additional flexibility to reduce flows and spill during periods when dissolved gas levels caused by spill exceed state standards.

The power benefits of the proposed terms include giving BPA the flexibility to store water in the spring -- beyond what is needed for fish -- and releasing it in the summer when it has greater economic value to Northwest ratepayers. This summer BPA and BC Hydro plan to begin negotiating a legal contract based on the proposed terms. If negotiations are successful, a new non-Treaty storage agreement could be completed by early fall. The new agreement would begin around fall 2011 and continue until Sept. 15, 2024.

Open House Schedule:

Tuesday, May 24 , 2011

5-7 p.m.

Riverpoint WSU/EWU campus

Nurses Building, Room 119

103 E. Spokane Falls Blvd

Spokane, WA 99202

Thursday, May 26, 2011

4-7 p.m.

Main Library

Hayes Memorial Auditorium

715 S. Capitol Blvd.

Boise, ID 83702

Wednesday, June 1, 2011

4-7 p.m.

Metro Regional Center

600 NE Grand Avenue, Room 501

Portland, OR 97232

Thursday, June 2, 2011

4-7 p.m.

Central Library, PAACR Mtg Room 6

1000 Fourth Ave.

Seattle, WA 98104