

**Power Business Line
Communications and Liaison - PL-6**

InterOffice Memo

Date: December 31, 1998
To: Thursday Morning Fish Strategy Group
From: Carolyn Whitney, PBL, Public Relations Manager
Subject: Unified Plan Messages and Schedule

A number of major decisions affecting Northwest fish and wildlife will be made in 1999. BPA will be a key contributor to the decision making process through its Biological Assessment on hydrosystem operations. The schedule calls for release of a draft BA for public comment in August with the final BA submitted to the Natinal Marine Fisheries Service in September. We will also participate in other regional processes leading toward a decision on a recovery plan for endangered Snake River salmon, a scientific framework for the region's fish and wildlife mitigation programs and further work on the Process for Analyzing and Testing Hypotheses (PATH). BPA has also made a significant commitment to the region to implement in rates and contracts the fish and wildlife funding principles developed in collaboration with regional entities.

Throughout 1999, BPA will be engaged in working with regional interests as well as state and federal agencies to develop a unified plan to establish a comprehensive long-term agreement regarding Federal Columbia River Power System operations for fish and wildlife mitigation. It is essential that BPA executives, managers, account executives and constituent account executives speak with one voice in communicating the agency's goals and values regarding Northwest fish and wildlife issues. It is equally important that these same BPA representatives provide accurate and timely feedback from external parties as the key regional fish and wildlife processes develop and unfold.

Please use the attached "BPA Fish and Wildlife Messages" as a guide in representing BPA to customers, constituents, interest groups and other outside parties working in the fish and wildlife arena. If the intent or meaning of any of the messages is unclear to you, please contact me, Carolyn Whitney, for clarification. Because communication is a two-way process, much of the value of BPA's fish and wildlife messages rests in the response(s) they may elicit from those who hear them. BPA management needs your help in understanding how outside parties receive these messages. In this regard, please E-mail any feedback or other information to Phyllis Dowty of my staff or call her at 503-230-5867.

In and effort to keep you informed on the development of the Unified Plan, we are setting up a site on the internal web. Once the site is established, and when new material is posted, you will receive an e-mail notice.

Thanks, in advance, for your help.

BPA Fish and Wildlife Messages

BPA will be involved in at least three major issues in the fish and wildlife arena in 1999:

- 1 Development of a Multi-Species Framework Plan by mid-1999 under the auspices of the Northwest Power Planning Council, federal agencies, and tribes;
- 2 Development by the federal government of a new long-term fish recovery plan for the Federal Columbia River Power System; and
- 3 Hydrosystem operations to comply with the NMFS Biological Opinion for endangered Snake River salmon and implementation of the Council's plan for fish and wildlife.

Together, these efforts can achieve BPA's goal of a unified fish and wildlife plan for the hydrosystem. As a result, it is important that BPA managers and staff convey consistent messages on these issues as they work with representatives of other federal agencies and regional stakeholders.

Major messages:

- BPA is committed to fulfilling all of its fish and wildlife obligations including its trust and treaty responsibilities;
- The agency will work to keep the options open for future fish and wildlife decisions by implementing in rates and contracts the fish and wildlife funding principles developed in collaboration with regional entities; and
- BPA supports a unified plan that would establish a comprehensive long-term agreement with the region that includes a description of Federal Columbia River Power System operations for fish and wildlife mitigation.

Unified plan messages:

A unified plan must:

- Work for all Northwest fish and wildlife; must be scientifically sound; must be affordable; and it must preserve at cost, below market prices for federal power in the Northwest;
- Identify BPA's total funding obligations for hatchery, harvest and habitat measures as well as hydrosystem operations;
- Satisfy the needs of all at-risk species and meet all applicable laws;
- Include performance standards and other measures of success;
- Achieve no-jeopardy for all listed species as well as contribute to the recovery and increase of harvestable anadromous fish runs;
- Be fair – it must acknowledge the accountability of other Northwest entities for achieving the region's fish and wildlife mitigation goals; and

- Cover at least 10 years for predictability.

Regional partnership messages:

- BPA wants to work with the region to develop a unified plan for the Columbia Basin;
- Because of federal deadlines, the time for the region to pull together is now.

PATH science forum messages:

- PATH provides important information that must be considered, along with other scientific, economic and social information when making decisions about salmon recovery;
- BPA believes that the results of the PATH modeling, once completed, will prove useful in helping the region develop a unified plan for recovering endangered salmon and steelhead;
- Current PATH information is preliminary. Future PATH work will include evaluation of alternatives for salmon and steelhead recovery that may not involve breaching dams such as changed hatchery operations, habitat improvements and/or harvest restrictions. Final conclusions about the merits of breaching must wait until this work is completed; and

Dam breaching messages:

- Breaching the lower Snake River dams is one of a number of alternatives being considered for the 1999 decision for long-term recovery. Other options include expanded fish barging and enhanced hydrosystem operations in combination with management of hatcheries, habitat and harvest operations.
- BPA supports regional discussion on the relative merits of all options for salmon recovery. We believe we have an obligation to the region to provide full disclosure of information regarding the effects on the power and transmission systems of breaching the dams.
- The ongoing regional discussion on breaching has two elements: a scientific evaluation that is yet to be completed and a political discussion.

Internal Process

- Internal alignment/agreement on these external messages is essential;
- Team leads, team members and staff must provide accurate and timely feedback from external parties; and
- Managers must communicate effectively with employees to ensure that these messages and BPA policy are clear.

