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## Wildlife crediting

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When a river is dammed the resulting lake inundates several acres of wildlife habitat, and the ensuing operation of the dam has further deleterious effects on wildlife. The Bonneville Power Administration has always taken its responsibility to mitigate for this loss of wildlife and habitat seriously. BPA spent almost \$200 million on fish and wildlife mitigation, acquired over 40,000 acres of habitat with other federal agencies and helped develop the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge before BPA's obligation to mitigate wildlife was codified in the Northwest Power Act of 1980.

Between 1984 and 1990, BPA funded impact assessments based on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Habitat Evaluation Procedure to determine the net effects on wildlife from each dam. These effects are expressed in habitat units. A habitat unit is determined by the numerical measure of the capacity of a given habitat to support a selected habitat species multiplied by the area of available habitat. Habitat units are calculated to describe the quantity and quality of habitat to ensure that wildlife is not simply mitigated on an acre for acre basis.

BPA mitigates wildlife habitat units on a 1:1 basis – BPA creates one habitat unit for each habitat unit lost because of a dam. The primary mean of imple-

menting wildlife mitigation is to acquire private fee lands for their fair market prices. BPA prioritizes the purchase of land with high-quality and at-risk habitat on a systemwide basis, based on the recommendations of state and tribal wildlife managers who then own and administer the land. Enhancing public land, conservation easements and agreements with landowners are other mitigation tools. Almost all land acquisitions or projects have enforceable provisions to help ensure that the land is managed for habitat in perpetuity beyond the life of the federal hydro projects. Many of the wildlife mitigation efforts also have a salutary impact on salmon and other fish. In addition, BPA typically provides 10 percent of the ongoing operation and management costs of the acquired land.

Wildlife crediting is not an indefinite project. BPA is responsible for replacing the habitat units lost due to the construction and operation of the federal dams. To date BPA has mitigated over 228,000 habitat units, or 50 percent to 60 percent of its wildlife mitigation obligation, throughout the Columbia River Basin at a total cost of over \$87 million.

