



Fish Facts

A compilation of relevant facts regarding the BPA ratepayer-funded effort to aid salmon and steelhead in the Columbia and Snake Rivers

Status of Columbia and Snake River Salmon Runs

- **Which Runs are Federally Protected:** Twenty-eight West Coast salmon and steelhead populations are listed under the Endangered Species Act. Of these, thirteen sub-populations, or “runs”, are found in the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Nine runs occur in the mainstem Columbia and Willamette Rivers and four in the Snake River. Four of these Columbia/Snake ESA-listed populations occur primarily below the Federal Columbia River Power Systemⁱ.
- **Since 2000, salmon and steelhead populations in the Columbia River Basin have been improving due to a combination of improved ocean conditions, better fish passage survival at the dams, improvements in freshwater habitat, harvest reforms and predator control.** The FCRPS Biological Opinions initiate many of the mitigation actions that benefit fish. Several stocks of salmon and steelhead have returned in record or near record numbers over the last several years. According to NOAA-Fisheries, ocean rearing conditions were less than optimal for juvenile fish in the spring of 2015 and 2016 which will likely result in lower adult returns over the next few yearsⁱⁱ.
- **2016 Salmon Return Results:** The 2016 return of most salmon and steelhead stocks were near recent historical averages. Some stocks did return in higher than expected numbers including summer chinook at over 91,000 fish making it the 2nd largest observed since counts began in 1994ⁱⁱⁱ. Over 354,000 sockeye salmon passed Bonneville Dam in 2016 making it the 5th highest return observed since 1938^{iv}.
- **Wild Snake River Salmon Stocks Improving:** In 1990, approximately 500 wild, Snake River fall chinook returned to the Columbia River Basin^v. In 2016, an estimated 14,500 wild Snake River fall chinook returned.^{vi} Returns of these ESA-listed fish have been generally strong and on a positive trajectory for the last 15 years.
- **2017 Forecast:** The 2017 forecast for adult returns of most stocks projects to be near recent 10-year averages^{vii}. The return of spring chinook is estimated to be over 160,400 fish^{viii}. This would be the 10th highest return since 1980. The fall chinook return is forecast to approximate last year's returns^{ix}.

Status and Implementation of the Biological Opinion

- **Current Biological Opinion:** Judge Michael Simon of the Oregon District Court delivered his opinion on the 2008 Federal Columbia Power System Biological Opinion (BiOp), as supplemented by the 2014 BiOp on May 4, 2016. The Court ruled that the 2014 BiOp violated the ESA as well as the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Court said: the approach the federal agencies used had flaws, the standard the agencies applied for measuring success was improper, the agencies failed to consider impacts from climate change, and they relied on actions that are not reasonably certain to occur or have uncertain benefits. The Court, however, declined to vacate the BiOp. The Court explained that the 2014 BiOp expires at the end of 2017, and remanded the BiOp to the agencies for further consultation, and directed the agencies to file the new biological opinion by March 1, 2018 and comply with NEPA by 2021.

- **Implementation of the 2014 BiOp** is ongoing until the new BiOp is issued in 2018 and includes funding for state and tribal projects that are positively impacting fish runs. Juvenile fish passage at federal hydro projects are at or near BiOp targets, many habitat projects have been successfully completed, and predator management has been dramatically improved.

Power Rates and the Cost of Fish & Wildlife Actions

- **Total cost of BPA Fish & Wildlife actions since inception (1978-2016):** about **\$16 billion**.^x
- **Annual BPA Fish & Wildlife costs:** BPA’s fish and wildlife costs vary year to year due to a number of factors including water conditions, program requirements and energy markets.
 - In **2016**, fish and wildlife costs were **\$621.5 million (\$126.9 million** in foregone revenue and power purchases and **\$494.6 million** in program expenses) with an **additional \$51.4 million** in capital investment.^{xi}
 - **Impact on the BPA power rate:** In recent years, fish and wildlife costs have **ranged from twenty-five to thirty percent** of total costs for BPA power.^{xii}

For the foreseeable future, salmon and steelhead mitigation in the Northwest will continue to be one of the largest wildlife recovery efforts in history. WRECA remains committed to cost-effective, science-based approaches to ensure ratepayers funds committed to this important endeavor produce measurable results.

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About the Washington Rural Electric Cooperative Association—Established in 1942, WRECA provides its members with a variety of services. Its main function is to serve as a single, cohesive voice for its members. Its mission is to proactively influence the regulatory environment in the best interest of the consumer-owned electric utilities in the state of Washington. Furthermore, WRECA identifies and monitors issues potentially affecting the membership and serves as a resource center for issues concerning its membership. For more information, see www.wreca.coop.

ⁱ 2010 Status Update for Pacific Northwest Salmon & Steelhead Listed under the Endangered Species Act.

http://www.westcoast.fisheries.noaa.gov/publications/status_reviews/salmon_steelhead/multiple_species/sr-2010-all-species.pdf

ⁱⁱ NOAA-Fisheries Forecast of Adult Salmon Returns for coho salmon and chinook salmon <https://www.nwfsc.noaa.gov/research/divisions/fe/estuarine/oeip/g-forecast.cfm>

ⁱⁱⁱ 2017 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Ron Roler, Columbia River Coordinator, March 3, 2017. Facsimile excerpts from U.S. v Oregon Technical Advisory Committee documents. And 2016 Joint Staff Report: Stock Status and Fisheries for Spring Chinook, Summer Chinook, Sockeye, Steelhead, and Other Species, and Miscellaneous Regulations. Joint Columbia River Management Staff, ODFW and WDFW; January 20, 2016. http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/crc/staff_reports.html

^{iv} *Id.*

^v 2016 Joint Staff Report: Stock Status and Fisheries for Fall Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, Chum Salmon, Summer Steelhead, and White Sturgeon. Joint Columbia River Management Staff, ODFW and WDFW; July 12, 2016. <http://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/crc/>

^{vi} 2017 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Ron Roler, Columbia River Coordinator, March 3, 2017. Facsimile excerpts from U.S. v Oregon Technical Advisory Committee documents

^{vii} 2017 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Ron Roler, Columbia River Coordinator, March 3, 2017. Facsimile excerpts from U.S. v Oregon Technical Advisory Committee documents

^{viii} *Id.*

^{ix} *Id.*

^x Bonneville Power Administration (information provided to customers).

^{xi} *Id.*

^{xiii} NW Power and Conservation Council’s State of the Columbia River Basin, Fiscal Year 2015; 2015 Annual Report to Congress, February 2016.