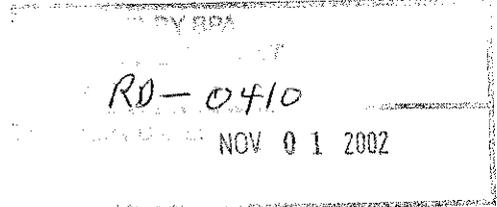


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October 1, 2002

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***MEMO FROM PHIL JENSEN...***

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TO: Steve Wright, BPA Administrator

RE: Columbia River Salmon and habitat for all marine life in the watershed.

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In case you hadn't seen this, I just wanted to bring this "persuasion" to your attention. As you can well imagine, this issue is very critical to those of us who are concerned and dedicated. Please take a moment to read and understand this material.

Thanks

Phil Jensen

P.S. If you would care to visit our facility and talk to any of the 265 people that work here about this issue, we would be very pleased to have you.

## Phil Jensen

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**From:** NSIALIZ@aol.com  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 24, 2002 4:51 PM  
**To:** NSIALIZ@aol.com  
**Subject:** Excellent editorial on Salmon & Energy  
**PIChecked:** true  
**PICheckedDate:** 9/24/2002 4:58:48 PM  
**PIMessageID:** 74F84E0B-B2C4-46D4-A117-30CF0A

BPA's notion of salmon costs turns word on its head  
09/24/02

By Michael C. Blumm

The Bonneville Power Administration recently claimed that salmon protection cost the region's ratepayers \$1.5 billion last year.

The power agency attributes more than 90 percent of the cost to buying power elsewhere so water could be spilled to help juvenile salmon migrate downstream. BPA's power system kills a majority of upriver juvenile salmon on their voyage downstream each year -- in some years up to 80 percent.

If it weren't for salmon requirements, the agency implies, the region's ratepayers would save lots of money.

The same, however, could be said about public education: If the public schools would only educate the economically efficient learners, the cost of public education would plummet. The slow learners, the disabled and the abused children -- like the salmon -- would simply fend for themselves.

Until 1982, that was what the salmon did. The results were disastrous: The Columbia Basin, once home to the world's largest salmon runs, now produces only about 1 percent of its historic wild fish populations. The hatchery fish that today dominate the Columbia Basin -- with their adverse effects on the genetics, health, and food supply of wild fish -- are the consequence of the BPA power system.

Fortunately, the law says that neither education nor federal hydropower production in the Columbia Basin should have as their goals only incurring the least costs or producing the highest profits. None of the Columbia dams was authorized principally for hydropower. And in 1980, Congress declared as national policy that the dams supplying BPA with electric power would be operated to protect and restore Columbia Basin salmon and other fish and wildlife "to the extent affected" by the dams.

BPA has been trying to deny or undermine that directive ever since.

The federal agency's latest attempt is to use last year's West Coast electricity crisis against salmon protection measures. According to a Northwest Power Planning Council report, the skyrocketing costs of electricity in the early part of last year caused BPA's salmon-related costs to escalate more than twelvefold from what they would normally "cost."

I emphasize "cost" because that is an extremely contentious word. Why is there no attribution of the annual "costs" that BPA operations have inflicted on the salmon resource? No one, certainly not BPA, attempts to

estimate those yearly costs. Over the life of the federal dams, those costs would make BPA's "costs" last year pale into insignificance.

Moreover, each and every year, other uses of the federal dams from which BPA markets power "cost" the agency losses in forgone power revenues. Yet BPA makes no public accounting of the costs that irrigation, navigation and flood control impose on its power-generating possibilities. Why don't we hear of how much irrigated agriculture "costs" the power system? What is the annual power "cost" of the immensely subsidized system of barge navigation from Lewiston, Idaho, to the ocean?

The answers are quite simple: BPA is targeting the force of least resistance, the salmon of the Columbia Basin and the people who depend on them. It has been this way almost since the power agency was created more than 60 years ago. The truly frightening thing is that the Northwest Power Planning Council, chartered in 1980 to be a watchdog over the BPA, now seems likely to buy into the power agency's view of "costs."

The council is now in the process of revising its salmon restoration plan. The states of Idaho and Montana have proposed to drastically reduce or eliminate the river flows and spills at dams the current plan dedicates for salmon protection.

BPA's claim of costs will surely be used by those supporting reduced salmon protection. The public ought to understand the contested nature of these costs and should oppose reducing salmon protection at and between the dams that have devastated the signature natural resource of the Columbia Basin until there is a better way to protect wild salmon. Michael C. Blumm is a professor of law at Lewis & Clark Law School and author of "Sacrificing the Salmon: A Legal and Policy History of the Decline of Columbia Basin Salmon," on the Web site [www.salmonlaw.net](http://www.salmonlaw.net).