

I. Introduction

The Northwest Power Act of 1980¹, the federal law that authorized the states of Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington to form the Northwest Power Planning Council, directs the Council to prepare a program “to protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife, including related spawning grounds and habitat, on the Columbia River and its tributaries affected by the development and operation of any hydroelectric project on the Columbia River and its tributaries while assuring the Pacific Northwest an adequate, efficient, economical and reliable power supply.”² The Act also directs the Administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration to “use the Bonneville fund to protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife to the extent affected by the development and operation of any hydroelectric project of the Columbia River and its tributaries

in a manner consistent with” the Council’s fish and wildlife program.³ The Council adopted its first fish and wildlife program in 1982 and amended it in 1984, 1987, 1991-93, 1994-95 and 2000.⁴

The Council is a planning, policy-making and reviewing body. It develops the fish and wildlife program and monitors its implementation primarily by Bonneville but also by the region’s fish and wildlife agencies and tribes, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and its licensees. Through an annual process since 1996, the Council solicits projects to implement the program, submits them for review by the Columbia Basin Fish and Wildlife Authority,⁵ the Independent Scientific Review Panel⁶ and the general public and then recommends projects to

Bonneville for funding in the coming year. Under the terms of a six-year memorandum of agreement (MOA) signed by federal agencies in 1996, Bonneville’s annual fish and wildlife budgets were anticipated to average \$435 million, of which \$183 million was estimated for hydro-power operations.

Bonneville is not the only entity that spends money on fish and wildlife mitigation and recovery in the Columbia River Basin. State and federal fish and wildlife agencies, Indian tribes, electric utilities, local governments and private groups and citizens contribute to fish and wildlife recovery in a variety of ways. It is not our intent in this report to document those other activities. The

Governors specifically requested we report on Bonneville’s expenditures, which constitute the largest in the region.

In compiling the information for our report, we were struck by the complexity and, in some cases, the confusion, of data collection, assembly and reporting regarding Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife. As a result of the impetus provided by the Governors in requesting this report, the Council is working with the region’s fish and wildlife agencies and Indian tribes to improve data collection and management. Improved project monitoring is a key element of the Council’s 2000 Fish and Wildlife Program.

