

Better Data Management is Needed

It took about 18 months to complete the inaugural annual report on Bonneville's fish and wildlife expenditures, which we issued in January 2001. In compiling the information for that report, we were hindered by the confusing state of data storage and availability in the basin. There was universal support among those we contacted at Bonneville, fish and wildlife agencies and others involved in mitigation and recovery activities to improve data collection and management.

It was difficult to compile the information for the current report because of accounting changes at Bonneville, which resulted in changes in

some of the data reporting categories. We hope these accounting changes will improve data access, as Bonneville attempts to improve its fish and wildlife data collection and management. As we reported in 2001, it goes without saying that improving data management will improve the public accountability of the Council's program and Bonneville's expenditures by making results accessible not only to specialists, but also to the public at large.

In response to a May 2000 report to the Council from the Independent Scientific Review Panel, in which the Panel found that no organization is taking responsibility for comprehensive

design of data collection in the basin, the Council, National Marine Fisheries Service, Bonneville and others are working with an independent contractor to develop a comprehensive monitoring program to provide the data needed to ensure progress in meeting the goals of the Council's fish and wildlife program and the federal Biological Opinions.

As noted earlier in this report, 2001 was a record year for Columbia River salmon and steelhead runs and also, ironically, for poor river conditions in the Columbia River Basin. Some of the biggest salmon and steelhead runs on record encountered the second-lowest Columbia River runoff on record. The low flows and resulting loss of hydropower — 4,000 megawatts, nearly enough for four Seattles — combined with market failures and unprecedented prices, forced Bonneville to spend a record amount on power purchases to make up for the lost hydropower.

As we reported last year, Bonneville funds continue to protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife of the Columbia River Basin impacted by the hydrosystem. During the past 21 years, spending has increased, project review has become more scientifically rigorous and financial accounting has been refined. We continue to anticipate that with improvements in data management and more locally based planning processes, Bonneville's fish and wildlife expenditures will become even more efficient and effective in the coming years.

