



# Between the Lines

Customer Newsletter Fall 2018 BentonPUD.org

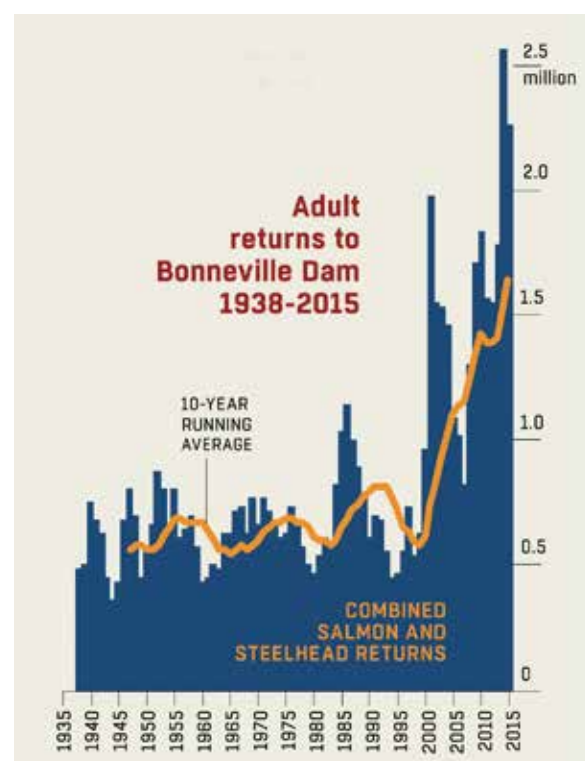
## Facts about the lower Snake River dams

Thanks to the tremendous network of dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers your electricity comes from carbon free, affordable, reliable hydropower. The benefits of the dams are numerous but there are some areas of misinformation being spread about the hydrosystem and the lower Snake River dams. Here are some facts:

■ **Replacing renewable power generated by the lower Snake River dams would be costly and counterproductive to reducing carbon emissions.** The four lower Snake River dams generate about 1,000 average megawatts per year. Under normal operating conditions, the four lower Snake River dams supply up to one quarter of BPA's operating reserves. This power is among the most affordable electricity in the Pacific Northwest. More importantly, the dams are essential to the reliability of BPA's electric grid. As the Pacific Northwest increases its reliance on renewable resources like wind and solar, the dams play an important role in reliability, providing clean power when these sources are unavailable.

■ **Removal of the lower Snake River dams is not simple and would cost billions.** The estimated cost to remove the dams is over \$2 billion. Removal or breaching of the dams takes Congressional authorization and funding. In addition to providing clean and reliable power, dams are instrumental for irrigation, transportation and tourism – all important for our economy.

■ **Dams and fish co-exist thanks to the technology and programs developed through the years.** Some contend salmon runs have declined primarily because of the lower Snake River dams; however, history shows human activities caused significant declines in salmon abundance starting in the 1800's, long before the dams were built. In the last 80 years, the number of adult salmon and steelhead returning from the ocean to Bonneville Dam has increased, in part due to the millions of dollars spent on hatchery production and enhanced fish passages at the dams.



Source: Citizen's Guide to the 2016 Comprehensive Evaluation – Protecting Salmon and Steelhead in the Columbia River Basin

Looking at the ten-year orange trend line (see graph) salmon and steelhead returns improved through 2015. Salmon and steelhead returns fluctuate each year. Runs in 2018 are predicted to be lower due to poor ocean conditions in 2015 & 2016 for juvenile migrants. Even so, returns are higher than those in previous decades. Further, the Columbia and Snake Rivers produce more juvenile salmon today than they did in the years immediately prior to dams and development according to the Independent Scientific Advisory Board.

■ Recently, you may have read about the Southern Resident Killer Whales (orcas) in the news. **NOAA scientists' research shows that lack of prey, toxins, and vessel traffic are detrimental to the orcas.** The misconception often heard is that the lack of prey – Chinook salmon – is primarily attributed to the lower Snake River dams. The three orca pods rely on 15 different Chinook runs, two of them from the Snake River. In fact, according to NOAA Fisheries, the "J pod" orcas that have been in the news spend most of their lives in Puget Sound; they typically don't swim the 150 or so miles down the west coast to the mouth of the Columbia River. Instead of focusing solely on the lower Snake River dams, a science-based plan is needed that focuses on all the issues that impact their survival, particularly in the Puget Sound area where salmon runs are struggling to improve.

## Thank You RiverFest

RiverFest 2018 was a big success with over 50 exhibitors and thousands of attendees. Thank you to everyone who supported this celebration of the Columbia and Snake Rivers and our dams.



For more information  BentonPUD.org or call Customer Service 509.582.2175