

# Coastlines

July 2016



Columbia River salmon are returning in colorful droves.

Photo courtesy BPA

## The Best-Laid Plans of People for Fish

*In spite of years of successful projects, disagreement continues over what works to increase fish populations*

by Central Lincoln's General Manager Debra Smith, and Northwest RiverPartners Director Terry Flores

We have much to be thankful for in the Northwest. Our natural environment is beautiful and abundant and our rivers provide food, water, irrigation and recreation. For generations we have fished, mined, logged and drawn water to grow crops. For the last 70 years or so, we've enjoyed low-cost electricity powered by large dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers. Unfortunately, the cumulative impact of our actions contributed to greatly reduce salmon numbers and push some stocks towards extinction. Fortunately, the various stakeholders to our amazing river system, including federal agencies, tribes, NOAA and the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), have been working together collaboratively to reverse this trend.

The effort has been expensive; more than \$15 billion has been spent on dam improvements and operational changes at the dams that enable salmon to travel safely downriver, and on habitat improvements that ensure salmon can spawn and sustain future generations. Funding occurs through power costs that local utilities like Central Lincoln pay to the BPA and pass along to their customers. For every \$100 you pay toward your monthly electric bill, \$15 to \$20 goes towards fish restoration.

The efforts have also been successful. Combined with favorable ocean conditions and hatchery efforts, our investment has delivered record adult salmon returns and young salmon surviving their journey to the ocean at rates approaching those in free-flowing rivers without any dams, according to NOAA Fisheries, the agency responsible for salmon protection.

Unfortunately, some environmental and fishing groups, along with the Nez Perce tribe have continued to litigate over

federal dam operations arguing that the federal salmon plan or Biological Opinion (BiOp) fails to do all that's required under the Endangered Species Act. This past May, a U.S. District Court judge ruled in their favor, ordering more analysis and more evaluation of alternatives including removal of one or more dams in the Columbia and Snake River hydro system.

It will take many years to fully understand and sort the meaning behind the judge's decision and today, the stakeholders to the BiOp are continuing to work together to assess the impact of the ruling and appropriate next steps. We're disappointed that collaboration and investment of this magnitude were found to be insufficient. And we're concerned about the future impact of this decision on Northwest power costs, and our customers.

*Northwest RiverPartners is an alliance of farmers, utilities, ports and businesses that promote the economic and environmental benefits of the Columbia and Snake rivers and salmon recovery policies based on sound science.*

*Debra is the Vice-Chair of the Public Power Council's Fish and Wildlife Committee and a member of the RiverPartners Board of Directors.*



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# Rate Increase Effective This Month

Perhaps the toughest decision our board makes is to increase rates. Over the past six years, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has increased its rates 28.7%. Yet, knowing we had customers who were struggling financially during the economic downturn, Central Lincoln did not raise its rates in tandem with the BPA.

Instead, we have done what we can to cut costs, including closing three satellite offices, eliminating jobs through attrition, and moving line crews to four-day work weeks to reduce fuel costs taking advantage of longer daylight hours in the spring, summer, and fall.

Unfortunately, our operating costs have continued to rise, and Central Lincoln's board has approved a general rate increase of 5%. Our average residential customer uses about 969 kWh every month. Combined with a \$1 increase in our Facilities Charge, an average residential customer will see a monthly increase of about \$4.39.

"We do not raise rates lightly," says Central Lincoln's Board Chair Ron Benfield. "We have been holding down costs as much as possible, but found a rate increase to be necessary. However, even with this increase, our rates are in the bottom third among electric utilities in Oregon."

## What Does It Cost to Run a....?

*Estimated prices to run home appliances with our new residential .0735¢ per kWh rate\**

Electric Appliance/Vehicle	Watts	Hrs/Month	Cost/Month
Air Conditioner (window unit)	1047	200	\$15.39
Blender/Food Processor	600	2	\$0.09
Cable Box	45	150	\$0.50
Car (Nissan Leaf) 1000 miles	1800	197	\$26.06
Car (Tesla S) 1000 miles	1800	250	\$33.08
Clock Radio	4	4	\$0.00
Coffee Maker	900	10	\$0.66
Computer, Desktop	150	30	\$0.33
Computer, Laptop	30	30	\$0.07
Crock Pot	100	32	\$0.24
Dehumidifier	250	126	\$2.32
Dishwasher	1440	21	\$2.22
Dryer, Clothes	4400	30	\$9.70
Electric Blanket	64	120	\$0.56
Food Dehydrator	600	4	\$0.18
Freezer	500	200	\$7.35
Furnace	15000	90	\$99.23
Hair Dryer	1000	6	\$0.44
Heat Pump (ductless)	2000	90	\$13.23
Heater, Portable	900	30	\$1.98
Heater, Baseboard	1500	180	\$19.85
Hot Tub (Heater)	1200	300	\$26.46
iPad (charging)	12	45	\$0.04

Electric Appliance/Vehicle	Watts	Hrs/Month	Cost/Month
iPhone (charging)	5	90	\$0.03
Lawn Mower	1200	4	\$0.35
Light Bulb (LED/CFL)	20	180	\$0.26
Microwave Oven	1000	15	\$1.10
Oven	2000	20	\$2.94
Range, Large Burner	2100	20	\$3.09
Refrigerator (Pre-1978)	479	300	\$10.56
1978-1989	319	300	\$7.03
1989-1992	256	300	\$5.64
1992 or newer	160	300	\$3.53
Stereo System	300	150	\$3.31
TV, LCD/LED 42"	150	150	\$1.65
TV, Plasma 50-56"	300	150	\$3.31
Toaster	1000	5	\$0.37
Vacuum Cleaner	1000	10	\$0.74
Ventilation Fan	200	30	\$0.44
Video Game (xBox 360 or PS3)	190	50	\$0.70
Video Game (Nintendo Wii)	18	50	\$0.07
Washing (Clothes) Machine	400	30	\$0.88
Water Heater, Heat Pump (50 gal.)	1000	183	\$13.45
Water Heater, 50 gallon	4500	135	\$44.65

**New Rate: 7.35¢ per kilowatt hour (kWh)**

*\*These are estimates. Your results may vary.*

Central Lincoln customers Debbie (left) and Patrick Jimmerson have been an all-electric car family for three years. While Teslas are perceived to be very expensive, Debbie notes some pre-owned Teslas like theirs are available in the mid-\$50,000 range. Nissan Leafs like the one Patrick is driving here (right) can be leased for \$209 a month or purchased for \$29,010, according



to the "Electric Car Insider EV Buying Guide." Both cars come with a charging cord that can be plugged into any wall outlet, and electric cars don't need oil changes or tune-ups, offering savings in maintenance costs as well as fuel cost savings (see "Cars" above).

