

Volume 5, Number 1

Spring 2000

# The Energy Activist

NW Energy Coalition

## Earth Day 2000

The Northwest Can Have **Clean Energy Now!**



photo by Jim Maloney

*Completed in 1998, Wyoming's Foote Creek Rim project was the first wind farm to produce power for the Northwest*

# Clean Energy Legacy



**E**arth Day 2000 will unite more than 500 million people in nearly every country in the world. For millions around the globe, Earth Day 2000 will be an initiation into taking action for a cleaner, healthier environment. Here in the Northwest, we enjoy a decades-long history of citizen activism aimed at safeguarding the region's spectacular natural heritage.

Thanks in large part to the efforts of the **NW Energy Coalition** the region is also blessed with the ingredients necessary to make a speedy transition to clean, renewable sources of energy. The Coalition and its diverse membership has worked for nearly twenty years to ensure energy conservation and investments in wind, solar and other alternative forms of energy have led the way in meeting our region's growing power needs.

The Northwest is the birthplace of state-of-the-art energy saving measures and home to cutting edge clean energy technologies which stand ready to replace dirty, outmoded methods of producing electricity. By building and sharing its legacy of smart energy choices, the region can spearhead a global clean energy revolution.



**Denis Hayes** was National Coordinator of the first Earth Day and is Chair of **Earth Day Network**

[www.earthday.net](http://www.earthday.net)



## The Energy Activist

Founded in 1981, the NW Energy Coalition is dedicated to the pursuit of clean and affordable energy. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, all donations to the NW Energy Coalition are tax-deductible.

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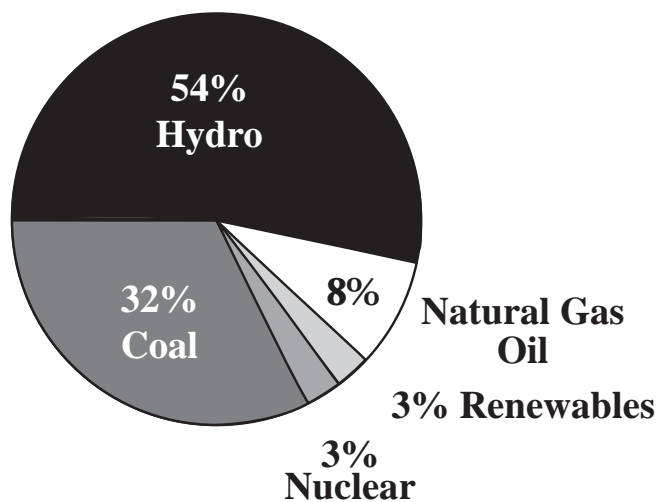
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## Northwest Energy Use\*



\* The above chart reflects power exchanges between CA and the NW. CA receives NW hydropower in the summer, and the NW receives coal generated electricity from CA during the winter.

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Written by Mark Glyde and Corinne Hollister  
 Designed and edited by Mark Glyde

# Clean Energy Now!

## So What's the Dam Problem?

Northwest energy diet dominated by fish-killing dams and dirty coal plants

Over half of the electricity consumed in the Northwest comes from hydropower, most of it from dams that harness the waters of the **Columbia** and **Snake Rivers**. Together, the two rivers drain an area larger than **Texas**. Melting snow from the **Cascades** (WA & OR), **Sawtooth** (ID), **Northern Rockies** (MT and Canada) and other northwest mountain ranges is often referred to as **white gold** for its ability to provide cheap, reliable fuel for hydroelectric generation turbines.

Hydropower dams generate electricity without producing carbon-dioxide and other dangerous pollutants, but many are deadly barriers to juvenile salmon migrating from their river birth waters out to the open ocean. Four dams in eastern Washington have been identified as the main culprits in the demise of Snake River salmon and steelhead, which once returned to spawn in the river and its tributaries by the millions.

One-third of our electricity comes from burning coal. Coal mining and burning fouls our air and adds to cancer risks, acid rain, global warming and a host of other health and environmental threats. Washington's massive **Centralia Coal Power Plant** holds the dubious distinction as one of the dirtiest power plants west of the **Mississippi River** and regularly shrouds **Mount Rainier** with its toxic exhaust.

The remainder of the Northwest's energy comes from the region's one operating nuclear power plant and a combination of oil, natural gas, agricultural and other waste and a sprinkling of clean, renewable energy sources like wind and solar power.

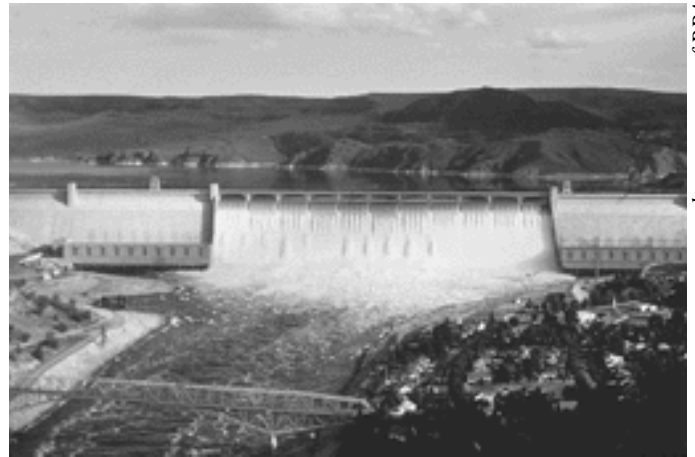


photo courtesy of BPA

*Hydropower dams generate electricity without producing air pollution — but at a terrible price. Grand Coulee dam cuts salmon off from over 1100 miles of prime spawning grounds*



photo courtesy of BPA

*Cleaner than coal (shown above), natural gas generators still cause global warming*

### Natural gas — “bridging fuel” or big mistake?

Natural gas combustion turbines, which are basically giant gas burning jet engines, are cleaner than coal, but still pump out huge quantities of carbon-dioxide, the main cause of global warming. Gas plants are often promoted as a way to bridge the gap between dirty coal and clean renewable energy sources. Once built, however, gas plants operate for more than 25 years. The rapidly growing Northwest is in danger of locking in gas burners for decades to come in a rush to meet its growing thirst for electricity. Enough gas-fired generation is proposed in the region to power the cities of **Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, Spokane, Boise and Missoula**.

**F**ortunately, alternatives exist today to power a clean AND affordable energy future. A vast reservoir of energy savings remain untapped in the Northwest. The falling cost of wind, solar, geothermal and other clean, renewable power technologies is allowing them to compete better with natural gas generation. And their environmental advantages can't be beat. **READ ON** to find out more about how we can meet our growing need for power, create good jobs and tread more lightly on the planet.

## The Wave of the Future is Here Today

Wind and solar power are the fastest growing new energy sources in the world

photo by Jack Odgaard



Vansycle Ridge (Oregon)

**A** single modern wind turbine can generate enough electricity to power as many as 500 Northwest households. Wind power plants can be as small as one turbine or as large as several hundred and can produce electricity at a cost just slightly higher than conventional fossil fuel power plants. And the cost of wind power is coming down as its popularity rises. To overcome the

on-and-off whims of weather, wind turbines are interconnected over large areas to ensure a steady stream of wind-generated electrons are flowing onto our electricity grid.

**E**nough sunlight strikes the **United States** in one day to power the entire country for over a year. Homes and buildings can be designed to capture the



sun's heat and light and photovoltaic (PV) panels can be used to convert the sun's rays into electricity. Although PV systems sometimes generate electricity at a central location similar to a conventional power plant, solar is uniquely suited to power individual homes and businesses on-site. Combining energy efficient building techniques with a modest PV system allows individual households to meet their own electricity needs.

## Planet Power

Harnessing energy from the Earth

Geothermal power plants capture steam from deep in the Earth's crust to generate electricity. The geologically active Northwest abounds with pockets of gentle, but powerful geothermal energy.

By choosing appropriate places to build geothermal wells, we can harness the earth's internal heat to meet a portion of our energy needs without interfering with sensitive wilderness areas or tribal lands.



photo courtesy of NREL

A hot spot on the Pacific "Rim of Fire"

## Simple as H<sub>2</sub>O

Hydrogen-powered fuel cells

Fuel cells capture the electrons released when hydrogen and oxygen combine to form water. They can power everything from washing machines, to cars and houses and even entire office buildings. The most common method used to produce hydrogen today is by reforming natural gas, which does release carbon dioxide. But because fuel cells use a simple chemical process, they convert natural gas to electricity without producing harmful pollutants like power plants which burn gas. The real promise of fuel cells is that hydrogen can come from clean, renewable energy sources. Solar photo-voltaic cells for example can be used to produce hydrogen from water.

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# Clean Energy Now!

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“There’s no cheaper cleaner power than power you don’t have to produce.”

Gary Zarker — Superintendent, Seattle City Light, on energy conservation

**E**nergy conservation is the clear winner when it comes to meeting our growing energy needs without trashing the Earth. Efficient technologies allow home appliances, lights, windows, computers, even entire factories to do the same job using less energy.

Enormous potential exists in the Northwest to slash energy waste and do more with less. Over the last two decades, the **Pacific Northwest** has earned bragging rights as a conservation leader by saving more than 1500 average megawatts of electricity — enough to power a city one and a half times the size of Seattle. It would take several large natural gas-fired power generators or a coal plant larger than **Washington’s Centralia Coal Plant** to generate that much electricity.

Cost-effective energy conservation measures are less expensive than building new power plants or buying electricity from power brokers in **California** or elsewhere. Conservation reduces the amount of power needed during times of peak energy demand, such as cold winter days. By using energy more efficiently we can reduce pressure on our aging power grid and make our energy supply more reliable.

By investing in conservation a little more each year, we can meet our growing demand for energy as we need it and avoid the risk, expense and pollution that comes with building new generation plants or buying electricity on the volatile open power market.



photo courtesy of BPA

*Since 1981, the Northwest has saved enough electricity to power a city larger than Seattle*

photo courtesy of Seattle City Light



*Simple, common sense improvements can cut household energy use in half*

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## Energy conservation a critical lifeline for vulnerable households

**F**or some households living on a low or fixed income, being energy efficient spares them the choice of whether to heat or eat. Despite our low electricity rates here in the Northwest, winter power bills can be as high as \$200 per month in houses and apartments which rely on electric baseboard heat. Electric heat tends to be the norm in less expensive homes and affordable housing complexes.

Low-income weatherization measures keep homes warmer in the winter, cooler in the summer and free-up dollars for other vital necessities like food, clothing and medicine. Installing more efficient windows, improving insulation and eliminating air leaks can cut winter heating bills by up to 50%.

## The Silicon Valley of Clean Energy

The Northwest is poised to lead the next high tech revolution

photo by Mike Nelson



*Our region is home to world-class clean energy entrepreneurs (Above: solar panels along Puget Sound)*

**Avista Labs in Spokane, Washington** and **Ballard Energy Systems in Vancouver, British Columbia** — have surged in recent months. **Siemens Solar's Vancouver, Washington** plant produces 20 percent of the world's photovoltaic (PV) cells, making it the largest production plant in the world. The company installs more PV generation than any other manufacturer, with installations in places like **New Mexico, California** and as far away as **Egypt, Germany** and **Saudi Arabia**.

Located in **Arlington, WA**, **Trace Engineering** leads the world in manufacturing power inverters for PV and wind systems. The inverters convert DC power produced by PV panels and wind turbines to usable AC current. Trace supplies inverters to **British Petroleum** for its worldwide solar operations and to the **Sacramento Municipal Utility District's** ambitious PV program. The second largest U.S. producer of inverters, **Heart Interface**, is based in **Kent, WA**.

According to a Climate Solutions report, "**How the Northwest Can Lead a Clean Energy Revolution**," **Applied Power**, based in **Lacey, Washington**, is the fastest growing distributor of ready to use solar PV power systems in the country. The company is also one of the world's five largest solar system design and installation firms. Applied Power was chosen as one of two finalists negotiating to build the world's biggest solar plant — a 30-acre site in **Albuquerque, New Mexico**.

As one of the world's leading fuel cell developers, **Ballard Energy Systems** recently received an award for its efforts. **Financial Times**, a leading business publication, presented Ballard with its 1999 **Most Promising Pre-Commercial Technology Development Award**. To capture the award a new product must be a promising a breakthrough, potentially commercial, technologically proven and environmentally beneficial. The company has hooked up with **Daimler-Benz** and **Ford** to produce fuel cell vehicles. Daimler-Benz is committed to reaching an annual production level of 100,000 vehicles each year by 2005. Ballard fuel cells currently power three **Chicago** buses and three **B.C. Transit** buses.

With these and other expanding renewable energy companies in the region, Roth says, the Northwest is poised to lead the world to a cleaner energy future. "But the competition is going to get fierce," he notes. "We'll need to match gutsy, visionary business leadership with political initiative in the public sector."

**T**he clean energy revolution starts here. Local experts hope to turn the Northwest into the Silicon Valley of renewable energy and the future is looking very bright.

**Rhys Roth**, co-director of **Climate Solutions**, a regional organization promoting solutions to global warming, says the Northwest has all the ingredients necessary to become a global player in the emerging clean energy revolution. The region already leads in the arenas of both technology and trade, Roth notes, and "we've built a terrific base of talent in energy efficiency. In addition, the Northwest is home-base for world-class clean energy companies."

Those companies are booming. Stocks for businesses developing fuel cell technologies — including



Technologies made here in the Northwest can help bring clean power to the 2 billion people across the globe living without electricity.

# Clean Energy Now!

## Clean Energy Builds Better Communities

**B**uilding a clean energy portfolio in the Northwest boosts our local communities. With every new, renewable energy project built, we protect the environment, provide jobs and nurture economic growth, and sometimes even save disappearing farmland. We can also power our homes and businesses and cut back on harmful pollution by turning our waste to electricity. Clean energy projects are already at work in the region, delivering these important community benefits.

### Vansycle Ridge Wind Farm

The first wind facility in the Northwest, owned by a subsidiary of **Florida Power & Light (FPL)** and operated by **Portland General Electric**, started generating electricity in November 1998, on farmland just outside **Pendleton, Oregon**, near the **Columbia Gorge**. Winds on the ridge average 16 to 18 miles per hour and can blow as strong as 56 mph. Maximum output of the 38 state-of-the-art turbines is 25 megawatts. The turbines produce 8.3 megawatts on average — enough electricity to power more than 5,000 homes and businesses.



photo by Jack Odgaard

*Oregon's new Vansycle wind farm is a win-win-win for farmers, the local economy and the environment*

The \$35 million project created more than 120 jobs and pumped money into local businesses — including metal shops, hardware stores, transportation and shipping companies, restaurants and hotels — which provided both services and supplies during construction. Local farmers also receive annual payments from FPL for use of their property. That money supplements their income and helps to ensure continued harvests from their farmland.

The **Renewable Northwest Project (RNP)**, a regional coalition of consumer groups, environmental organizations and renewable energy developers, reports industry analysts estimate wind projects create three times as many jobs as any comparable (based on dollars spent) fossil fuel-based facility. Furthermore, a natural gas or coal plant generating the same amount of electricity would emit 30,000 to 80,000 tons of carbon dioxide each year, along with other harmful air pollutants.

photo courtesy of RNP



*Rachel Shimshak of RNP celebrates the opening of Vansycle*

## Innovative technologies put waste to work

### Klickitat PUD's Landfill Gas-to Energy Plant

**K**lickitat County Public Utility District (PUD)'s \$13 million facility cleans and compresses methane gas from one of the largest landfills in the country and turns it into 8.4 megawatts of electricity. The project reduces air emissions at the central Washington site by almost 85 percent. One government official compared the biogas recovery project to taking as many as 58,000 cars off the road.

The **Redmond, Washington-based National Energy Production Corporation** designed, built and now operates the plant. **Snohomish PUD** signed a five-year contract to purchase the majority of the power produced at the plant. Twenty-five percent of the garbage delivered to the landfill comes from Snohomish county. Officials plan to expand the plant to generate 23 megawatts of electricity by 2013.

### Portland's Wastewater Fuel Cell

**A** new fuel cell power plant in Portland transforms wastewater methane gas into electricity. The fuel cell is made specifically for use with wastewater treatment plants and is one of the first of its kind in the country.

The 200-kilowatt fuel cell — big enough to power a small office building — provides efficient, reliable power to the control center of the wastewater treatment plant. The city expects the fuel cell to save over \$100,000 per year on electric costs.

# Earth Day 2000

## Energy Conservation Makes \$ense

Unrivaled as a clean energy source, conservation saves money and creates jobs

photo courtesy of Seattle City Light



*Home weatherization brings winter heating costs under control for Seattle seniors and others living on a low or fixed income*

**T**he path to a clean and affordable energy future for the Northwest is lit with energy conservation. Investing in more efficient light bulbs, heating and air-conditioning systems and better insulation not only saves money, it also cuts pollution by reducing our reliance on dirty fossil fuels.

According to the **Oregon Office of Energy**, conservation is not only the most environmentally-friendly energy resource but the cheapest in the long run. In 1997, Oregon saved enough energy, worth \$250 million, to power its capitol city for one full year. And last year Oregon lawmakers and clean energy advocates laid a cornerstone for conservation in the state's new electric utility deregulation law. That law will pump more than \$50 million annually into the state's conservation efforts and achieve approximately 17 average megawatts of energy savings per year, enough to power over 10,000 Oregon households.

Investing in energy efficiency is an investment in the regional economy. Conservation provides jobs to the people of the Northwest—approximately 10,000 at last count. And there are many examples of successful conservation efforts in the region, home to progressive utilities such as **Avista Utilities**, the **Emerald**

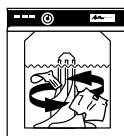
**People's Utility District**, the **Eugene Water & Electric Board**, **Seattle City Light**, the **City of Ashland**, and **Snohomish Public Utility District**. The Northwest's efforts to cut energy waste proves common-sense conservation is an effective, inexpensive and environmentally superior approach to an energy policy that protects our planet and ensures we have the electricity we need.

### The A B C's of conservation — schools lead the way

**T**hree schools in Seattle teamed up with the **Washington D.C.-based Alliance to Save Energy (ASE)** to cut energy use and teach kids about the benefits of conservation. Through its **Green Schools** campaign, ASE reports the three schools — one elementary, one middle and one high school — saved a total of \$80,000 over two school years and avoided the release of 64.8 tons of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), a harmful greenhouse gas. To put that in perspective, the average car emits 7.5 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> each year while one acre of trees absorbs about 3.5 tons.

### NW alliance boosts super-efficient washer sales

**I**n 1997 a group of electric utilities, state governments, public interest groups and industry representatives founded the **Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (NEEA)** to promote energy-efficient products and services. In just 18 months, NEEA cultivated a stronger market for super-efficient washers by offering \$100 rebates through its **WashWise** program. In that short period sales of the energy and water saving machines jumped from 2 percent to 12 percent of all washers sold.



*Regular*



*Less Filling*

### Cementing savings

**C**ement manufacturers at the **LaFarge Corporation**, a large industrial customer of Seattle City Light, is saving more than \$200,000 every year after a redesign of its plant, which included installing energy-efficient motors. The redesign not only cut the company's energy use, but also slashed its operating budget and reduced the factory's air emissions by as much as 78 percent.

# Clean Energy Now!

## Is Bigger Better?

From palm pilots to personal power plants — big benefits come in small packages

**I**magine a single appliance, about the same size as your furnace, which can power your home, reduce pollution, eliminate black outs, slash your winter heating costs, and prevent damage to your computer, stereo and other sensitive electronic gadgetry. Energy technologies exist today which can do all of that and more.

Hydrogen run fuel cells and most other on-site power generators produce electricity quietly and efficiently. Fuel cells generate heat which can be harnessed to heat homes and buildings and they reduce or eliminate dependence on the power grid. Homes and buildings which produce their own electricity avoid the inconvenience of black outs and the expense of power surges which can fry sensitive electronics when power comes back on line after an outage.

Small-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, fuel cells and other on-site power generators are superior in other ways. Relying on many small power generators means we don't have to rely as much on traditional large, or central-station, power plants. By avoiding construction of new plants we avoid the risk, expense and environmental damage of building them and the giant transmission lines needed to carry the electricity they produce to cities and towns where power is used. Mobilizing these new technologies and saving energy can also help keep the power lines we already have from becoming dangerously overloaded as our demand for electricity grows.

The utility of the future will still depend on large power plants, but will come to rely more and more on small, on-site power generators. A small solar PV system, for example, can produce electricity for a single house, but remain connected to the power grid. When the PV system is producing more power than needed, the excess electricity feeds into the grid allowing the household to bank power with its utility to be used at times when the system is not producing enough. This “**net metering**” exists by law in over 20 states, including **Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana**. Even with larger on-site systems, staying connected to the grid offers many advantages for both the utility and the system owner. The grid offers a vital back-up for on-site generators which in return can feed excess electricity into the power grid to be used by other utility customers.

Many businesses and factories are already installing their own generation. Reliability is critical to computer systems and many manufacturers, particularly those using expensive and sensitive materials which are vulnerable to even a brief power surge or outage. Extreme hot or cold weather can send demand for power surging, driving the price of electricity up to more than 100 times its normal cost. In the newly competitive electricity industry, increasingly dominated by predatory merchant power producers, both utilities and their customers can save money by turning to small on-site generators when the market price of power on the grid spikes upwards.



photo by Mike Nelson

**Above:** Mike Nelson's Seattle houseboat is powered by solar panels, wind power and a quiet, efficient natural gas generator. Mike has plans to add a fuel cell.

**Below Left:** The boat's solar panel and micro wind-turbine



photo by Mike Nelson

## The Power of Coalition

Diverse interests speaking with one voice can overcome politics as usual

**W**ith all the necessary components right here in the **Pacific Northwest**, we are well on the way to building a clean and affordable energy future. And one of the region's greatest strengths — one which will ensure we protect the planet and produce efficient and affordable electricity — lies in our success at working together to find common sense solutions.

The **NW Energy Coalition** is in good company with organizations like the **Renewable Northwest Project** and the **Save Our Wild Salmon** coalition. Each of these regional groups represents a diverse membership which can speak with one voice and have a major impact on public policy decisions.



### Renewable Northwest Project

The Renewable Northwest Project is an alliance of consumer groups, environmental organizations and renewable energy developers.

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The NW Energy Coalition is an alliance of more than 85 consumer, civic and environmental organizations, low-income advocates, utilities, labor representatives and businesses in the region.

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The Save Our *Wild* Salmon is an alliance of sport and commercial fishing groups and environmental organizations.

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[www.removedams.org](http://www.removedams.org)

“Forging policies which satisfy multiple interests is always a challenge,” notes **Sara Patton**, executive director of the NW Energy Coalition. “But coming to the table with a plan supported by low income, sports fishing, environmental and utility advocates AND everyone in between is far more persuasive to decision makers.”

A coalition rests on a broad, credible and politically powerful base of members. Coalitions, however, must often solve multiple problems at once. They also must face the challenge of accepting some short-term negative impacts on one constituency for the long-term benefit of all.

A recent coalition effort helped to pass a utility restructuring law in **Oregon** that will promote energy conservation, development of new, renewable energy sources and reserve \$10 million each year to help working families meet winter heating costs. Another coalition campaign is working to remove four dams on the lower **Snake River** to restore endangered salmon and steelhead and replace power from the dams with clean energy.

If you are associated with an organization which would benefit and contribute to the region's coalitions, please encourage your board of directors or executive director to consider joining us.

## From the Director

Photo by Ron Reeder



### We Have Met the Enemy and He is Us

**E**arth Day 2000 and the subject is energy! I was reminded recently of the Earth Day 1971 poster in which **Pogo, Walt Kelly's** philosophical cartoon

possum, observed, "We have met the enemy and he is us." Pogo was meditating on all the ways in which human beings have trashed the planet and endangered not "just" snail darters and spotted owls but our own species as well.

Our production and use of energy has been one of the dirtiest of human businesses. From **London's** miasmatic and lethal pea soup fogs (from burning coal) to the continued production of deadly nuclear poisons with nearly infinite lifetimes, we have fouled our own nest in order to heat our homes and run our machines.

Some of us manage to avoid guilt for some environmental disasters: I don't eat mammals and am glad to duck responsibility for swine manure lagoons. But all of us use energy. All of us are supporting coal burning power plants, nuclear poison producing power plants

and salmon killing hydroelectric dams. And that's before we get to transportation energy. The enemy IS us.

The good news is that we have met our friends and they are us, too. We can conserve energy; we can choose clean energy; we can make a difference. And the even better news is that we have the power to amplify those individual choices into societal choices because we are working together in coalition. We are bringing a powerful, diverse combination of voices to policy makers responsible for energy decisions.

On March 27, I was enormously proud to bring more than half of the Coalition's executive board to a meeting with **Bonneville Power Administrator, Judi Johansen**. She heard advocates for low income people, renewable energy, residential consumers, salmon and energy conservation from four states speak together for clean and affordable energy. We can become our own best friends through the power of coalition and commitment. Let's take the opportunity of Earth Day 2000 to inspire us and transform more of the enemy into friends!

## Subscribe Today!

### Yes, I Want To Join the NW Energy Coalition!

- \$40 Sponsorship:** Receive both Energy Coalition publications and invitations to NWECA caucus state meetings.
- \$20 Membership:** Receive the *Energy Activist* and invitations to your state's NWECA caucus meeting.
- \$12 Limited Income Membership:** Receive the *Energy Activist*.
- I am also Enclosing a Tax-Deductible Contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

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 American Rivers  
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 Eugene Water & Electric Board — OR  
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 Washington Solar Industries Association — WA  
 Washington Wilderness Coalition — WA  
 Working for Equality and Economic Liberation — MT  
 Yakima Valley Opportunities Industrialization Center — WA

**Associate Members**

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 Puget Sound Energy

**Supporting Members**

Clackamas County Weatherization — OR  
 Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development — WA  
 Housing Authority of Skagit County — WA  
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