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The Energy Activist

NW Energy Coalition

Power Shortage

Clean energy ready to meet the challenge

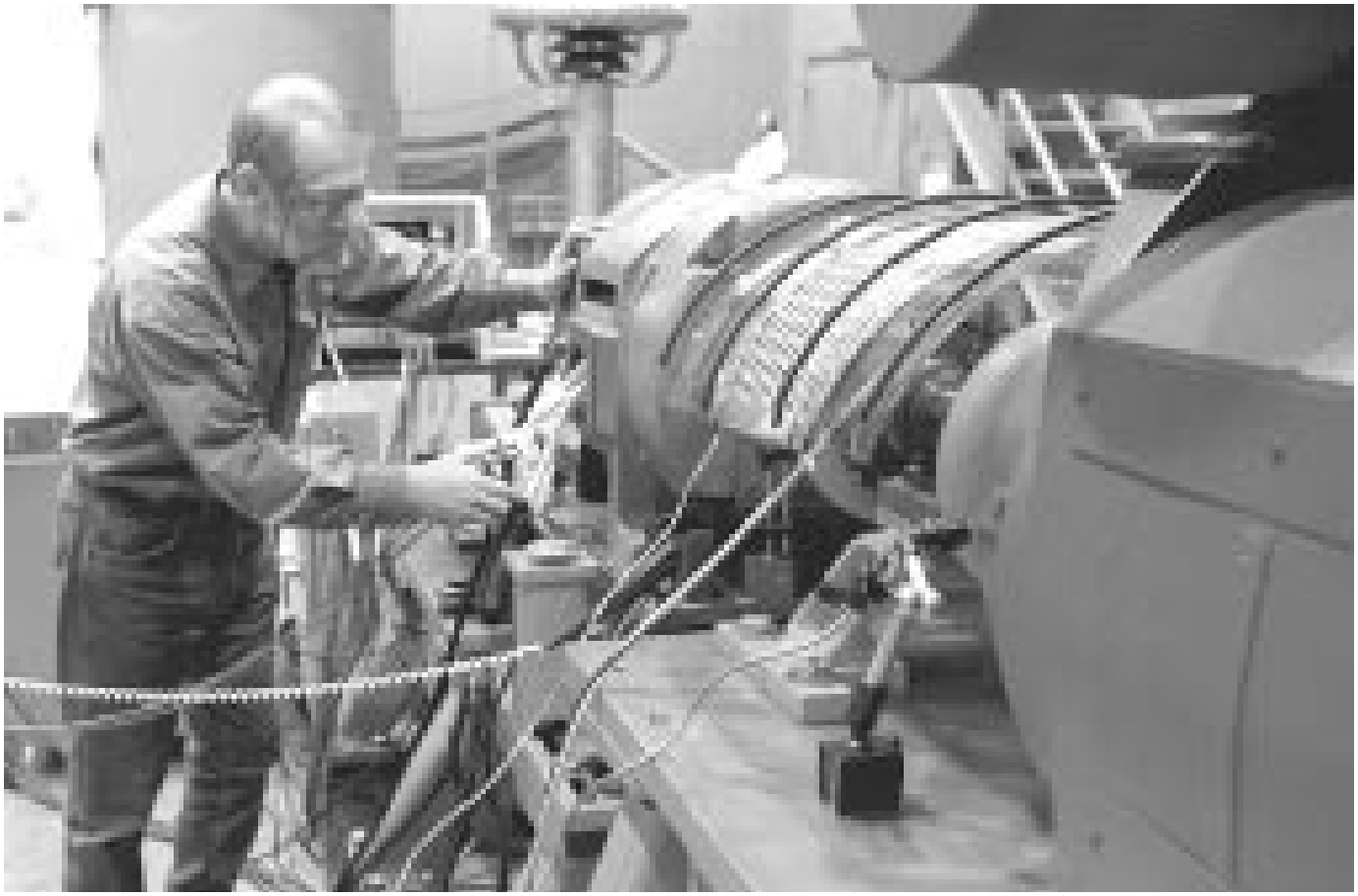

photo courtesy of WSU Energy Program

Tapping into a vast reservoir of energy conservation — more efficient industries can deliver mega-savings for everyone in the Northwest

Editor's Note

Doing More With Less

During most of the second half of the 1990s, natural gas prices were at an all time low and the entire West Coast enjoyed a surplus of electricity. The year 2000 brought an end to the energy glut and this year's summer delivered a rude wake-up call in the form of record high prices in the wholesale electricity market.

Uncertainty in the new era of competition in the utility industry kept development of new power plants at bay for most of the previous decade, but also prompted the Bonneville Power Administration and most utilities to drop their investments in energy conservation, which were still growing in the region as late as 1994. Conventional wisdom at the time held that the long-term pay off offered by conservation was impractical in the cutthroat climate of competition.

Today, utilities are asking their customers to use less electricity in an attempt to avoid paying the exhorbitant prices commanded by power marketers on the winning side of competition. Voluntary reductions in power use are necessary, but should be viewed only as a stop gap measure on the way to restoration of the kind of energy-efficiency investments that allow customers to reduce their demand for electricity without turning their lights off. Conservation is about doing more with less — not doing without.

— Mark Glyde

NW Energy Coalition
For a clean and affordable energy future

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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California Connection

When California's demand peaks on hot summer days, the Northwest sends power South. In turn, California sends electricity to the Northwest where power use spikes in the winter. The historical power exchange has kept both regions from building additional power plants. But explosive growth in electricity consumption threatens to overwhelm power grids up and down the West Coast in both winter and summer.

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— written by Communications & Outreach staff

Conservation Cuts Come Home to Roost

Rollback of world-class efficiency effort fuels power shortage threat

In the ten years preceding 1997 the Northwest saved enough electricity to power the cities of **Seattle, Washington** and **Eugene**, **Oregon** combined.

Sadly, this track record of achievement virtually ground to a halt with the onset of energy deregulation in the mid-90s. If the Northwest had stayed its course of capturing more conservation every year, our power grid would be under far less pressure than it is today.

Uncertainty and new competitive pressures also kept plans for new power plants on the drawing board even as the West Coast power surplus began to dwindle and prices began to rise in the late-90s.

photo courtesy of Seattle City Light

Rapid growth and the emergence of the Northwest as a driver of the new digital economy are finally catching up to the region's power grid. Internet server centers, for example, have sprouted up all over Seattle and in other high-tech strongholds. Additional data centers proposed for the **Puget Sound** region together would consume enough electricity to power a city the size of **Spokane**, **Washington**.

photo courtesy of BPA

Demand for electricity, higher than ever before, promises to keep expanding and new power resources have not kept up. Analysts predict the Northwest now faces a one-in-four chance of being caught without enough power sometime during the next four years.

Natural gas-fired combustion turbines are the preferred option for most utilities, despite the enormous quantity of greenhouse gas pollution they produce. Fortunately, the Northwest enjoys a vast reservoir of potential energy savings that is cheaper than gas-fired generation.

Rising prices are also opening the door for wind power and other clean, renewable technologies to compete with fossil fuels.

A penny saved is a quarter earned?!

Every kilowatt we save is a kilowatt our utilities don't have to buy on the volatile whole sale power market where prices last summer reached more than 25 times what they were just one year earlier. Energy savings, whether they are achieved in a factory, skyscraper or our own homes, help lower everyone's rates.

Turning the Corner on Clean Energy

photo courtesy of BPA

Big bang for the buck

Northwest aluminum smelters, which together consume some 3000 average megawatts, rely on outdated, inefficient technologies. They could easily cut their consumption by 10%, or 300 average megawatts and become more competitive.

The Northwest needs a two-track strategy to meet the power shortage challenge. In the short-term, we must make plans to curb the amount of electricity we use at times when our demand for power is greatest. Over the long haul, we must restore the kind of cost-effective energy conservation investments that served us so well in the past, and we must break ground faster on new renewable resources such as wind and solar power. It's time to turn the corner on clean energy.

Shaving peak power consumption

The highs and lows of power consumption on a mass scale are regular and predictable. Individual households can help prevent a power shortage without reducing their overall energy use. For example, dishwashers and other appliances can be set to run during the workday or the dead of night rather than in the evening when heating systems tend to work their hardest. In a similar vein, a factory can shift the most electricity-intensive part of its production process away from times when regional power demand is highest.

Building the conservation power plant

Energy conservation can do what any power plant can do, only better. The Northwest captured over 200 average megawatts of cost-effective energy conservation in a single year (1994). A large gas-fired power plant can produce 500 average megawatts of electricity per year and takes from two to four years to build. The conservation power plant, however, will never suffer a breakdown, can last much longer and doesn't cause pollution.

In **Seattle** alone, a recently completed assessment of energy savings potential found as much as 260 average megawatts of conservation can be delivered in the city over a 20-year period at an average price of just 2.1 cents per kilowatt hour or less. The current cost of gas-fired generation is well over 3 cents per kilowatt hour.

Energy dictionary

Cost-effective energy conservation refers to energy saving measures that cost less than building a new power plant or buying electricity on the open power market.

An **average megawatt (aMW)** is an amount of electricity consumed over the course of an entire year. 1100 aMWs are needed to power the city of Seattle.

Renewables are ready!

Competitive with fossil fuel power plants, wind power has no fuel cost and is the fastest growing source of new generation in the world.

Playing Russian Roulette With Our Energy Future

Locking into gas burners a dangerous gamble for our environment and our pocketbooks

Natural gas-burning power plants release far less toxic pollution than their coal-fired predecessors, but they still generate enormous amounts of carbon dioxide, the main cause of global warming.

Gas burners carry other risks. **Western Canada's** most accessible and cheapest natural gas reserves are dwindling at the same time demand for the fuel is soaring. As a result, gas prices in the Northwest, which relies on Canada for most of its gas supply, have more than doubled in the last year and are projected to stay high or rise further.

Double whammy for our wallets

Higher gas prices boost home heating bills but they also raise our electricity rates. Electricity prices are increasingly influenced by the price of natural gas which has become the preferred fuel for power generation among utilities and other power producers. Once built, gas-fired power plants operate for twenty-five years or more, and the cost of the electricity they produce is determined mostly by the price of the fuel they burn. The cost of power from **Washington's Clark Public Utilities' River Road** generating plant rose by almost 40% this year due to rising gas prices.

In diversity is strength

A diverse mix of power resources, built on a solid foundation of energy efficiency, offers the Northwest the best balance for protecting our air, our water, our atmosphere and our pocketbooks.

Washington Emerges as Battleground State

Energy policy is shaping up as a top-of-mind issue among **Washington State** lawmakers gearing up for the 2001 session. The developer of the proposed **Sumas 2** power plant near **Bellingham** has promised to seek a sales and use tax exemption on construction of large gas-fired facilities for a third consecutive year.

Dire predictions of potential power shortages in the state have already prompted some legislators to come out in favor of the tax break as a necessary step to encourage development of new electricity resources. Critics counter that developers don't need such an incentive given the current high demand for power.

Lawmakers could best serve Washingtonians by encouraging increased statewide investment in energy conservation and development of new renewable resources.

Governor Locke comes out early for clean energy

"We need to really encourage more conservation of energy. We need to look at tax incentives for renewable sources — things that have been blocked by the legislature in the past. And we need to look at evening out demand and use. . . With the new technologies that we have, it's possible for companies to charge lower rates for the use of energy during non-peak hours to even out our load and not require the production of so much energy."

— **Washington Governor Gary Locke** responding to a question about the power shortage at a **September 29** gubernatorial candidate debate in front of the **Association of Washington Business**.

Sacrificing Salmon

Summer power shortage stalls efforts to keep salmon out of harms way

At least twice last summer the **Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)** used water meant to direct migrating young salmon away from deadly hydro generation turbines to produce additional power for **California** instead. Although BPA is required by law to provide minimum spill and flow levels to help salmon survive the dams, the agency is allowed to suspend fish operations when either California or the **Northwest** is threatened by blackouts.

Salmon restoration activists, while sympathetic to BPA's obligation to help our neighbors to the South, insist the agency be better prepared in the future. California is almost certain to experience power shortages again over the next two summers. Within two to three years, investments in energy conservation, new renewable resources and natural gas-fired combustion turbines will begin to fill the gap.

What happened this summer highlights the need for sound energy management policies that prevent salmon from bearing the brunt of power emergencies and allow the Northwest to avoid buying high-priced power on the open market. It's time to tap into energy conservation savings and to invest in clean energy technologies such as wind and solar. It's time to stop sacrificing fish.

Clean energy can diversify our power resource base, boost local economies and provide a clean alternative to dirty fossil fuel-burning electric plants. BPA also can promote more flexibility with its large customers such as aluminum smelters, which together consume enough electricity to power three cities the size of **Seattle**. In return for reducing their power consumption, BPA can share with those industries a portion of the enormous profits the agency stands to make when it sells power South at times of peak demand.

Despite the power shortage, bypassing four dams on the **Snake River** remains the best option for restoring salmon. Dam bypass is recognized by independent scientists and backed by officials from the **U.S Fish and Wildlife Service** as the best option to restore endangered salmon and steelhead stocks and to meet the obligations of federal laws and treaties signed with **Canada** and Northwest **Tribes**.

photo courtesy of BPA

Water is spilled at Columbia and Snake River dams to direct migrating young salmon away from deadly power generation turbines.


Seattle Post-Intelligencer

A study by the **Natural Resources Defense Council** and the **NW Energy Coalition** found that the power produced at the four dams can be replaced affordably with clean energy. "If a decision were made to remove the dams today, they wouldn't come out tomorrow," says **Nancy Hirsh**, policy director for the NW Energy Coalition. "We will have time to tap into the vast reservoir of energy savings available in the Northwest."

What Power Shortage?!

Ed Roe takes energy independence to new heights in Big Sky Country

On the **Winter Solstice** last year, as the sun was about to slowly push back the **Montana** darkness, **Ed Roe** began producing his own electricity. With two submersible hydro-turbines and 24 photovoltaic (PV) solar panels in place, Roe now is searching for a tower tall enough to hold a wind turbine above the trees. He's hooked on small-scale, home-based renewable energy.

photo provided by Ed Roe

Roe, with help from his wife and three kids, has reduced his family's power pull from the **Montana Power Company** from an average of 33 kilowatt hours (kWh) per day to roughly 3 kWh. His monthly electric bills have dropped to about $5. With a bit of creative engineering, and the expertise of **Independent Power Systems** in **Bozeman**, Roe's generation system is a success. The two hydro-turbines produce a maximum of 4800 watts per day when a nearby seasonal stream has a steady flow — from April to November. Assisted by a tracker, 24 100-watt PV panels supply the bulk of power. Both components are connected to inverters manufactured by **Trace Engineering**.

Roe says he was first motivated by reliability concerns because he works summers away from home. From **Old Faithful** in **Yellowstone National Park**, he worried about power failures which could spoil two freezers full of food and interrupt an irrigation system designed to green up the place and keep wildfires at bay. He also wanted to cut electric bills and decrease reliance on fossil fuels. Now, this Montana man is inspired most by the idea of turning his electric meter backward.

photo provided by Ed Roe

Roe was the first official net metering customer on the utility's system according to **Dave Ryan**, renewable resource coordinator for Montana Power and winner of the **NW Energy Coalition's Conservation Eagle Award** for his hands-on support of the company's investments in renewable energy. "He's really dedicated," Ryan explains, "and he's got a Cadillac of a system." Roe's power first charges a backup battery pack, then flows to the garage where the freezers are kept, then to the house or back through the meter out to the grid.

To complement his home generation, Roe installed a gas range and clothes dryer and compact fluorescent lights throughout the house. "This is one of the best things I've done in a long time," Roe notes. "It's certainly the smartest thing I've done."

Montana's **Universal System Benefits** fund — created as part of the state's 1997 electric utility restructuring law — covered $10,000 of Roe's expenses. As a result of that law, Montana Power invests more than $6 million annually in energy conservation, new renewable resources and low-income weatherization.

Staying the Course

Craig Satein guides weatherization efforts through rough waters of deregulation

photo by Miriam Satein

In the rough seas of low-income energy services funding, **Craig Satein** has managed to ride the weatherization wave successfully for almost two decades. On his watch at the **Housing Authority Community Service Agency (HACSA)** of **Lane County**, thousands of **Oregon** consumers have learned to conserve energy, to get help with electric bills and to insulate their homes.

Satein, who supervises the **Low Income Weatherization Program**, has a knack for getting the money he needs to fund his projects. He's been a leader in the effort to secure a flow of weatherization dollars from the **Bonneville Power Administration**. Satein is so efficient at securing federal grants and utility dollars that a friendly rivalry sometimes results among Northwest low-income advocates reaching for the same pot of money. But Satein operates in a manner that evokes harmony.

"Craig Satein is a role model for this region, and for the country," says **Michael Karp**, a founding member of the **NW Energy Coalition** and lead of the Coalition's **Low-Income Organizing Network**, "not only for the professionalism he brings to the table, but for his integrity, commitment, positive thinking, and balance."

Satein was one of the first graduates of the **Energy Management Program** at **Lane Community College**.

He was hired by HACSA in 1983 and worked as an energy auditor for seven years. In this position, he established a foundation in communities through hands-on, quiet contact with the people.

At its peak, the Weatherization Program employed nine people and served more than 10,000 households each year. As the electric industry faced deregulation, many utilities drastically cut their investments in low-income conservation. Satein now works in an office of five and serves 5,000 customers each year. "But we're still here, we did not go away," he explains. "The merits of conservation continue to prevail."

Satein projects his 2001 budget at $1,047,000, an increase of almost $100,000. He works with 10 different accounts to implement weatherization projects. Seven of those are public utilities, including NW Energy Coalition members the **Eugene Water & Electric Board** and **Emerald People's Utility District**.

Satein says he hopes to extend outreach efforts this year to identify more people who could benefit from conservation projects and to offer small-scale renewable energy systems to low-income folks. He offers this strategic philosophy, "You really need to maintain your belief and commitment that you are doing the right thing. Never

Landmark Law to Avoid Pitfalls of Competition

Set to go into effect next year, **Oregon's** utility restructuring law is a model for the nation to follow in protecting consumers and the environment and has been hailed as the most progressive bill of its kind.

photo provided by FCEC

"As we started to explore the issue three years ago, we saw a sea of bad bills across the country that we believed were bad approaches to restructuring, with little or no benefit for small customers," says **Jeff Bissonette** who coordinates the **Fair and Clean Energy Coalition**. "Early national proposals also did not protect the interests of low cost states. In contrast, **SB 1149** is restructuring done right, a bill that's right for Oregon."

In a move that is nationally unique, Oregon's approach allows residential customers to stick with the service they currently receive but also offers a portfolio of options which includes a rate based on market power prices and a green power alternative.

The Fair and Clean Energy Coalition is a diverse alliance of organizations which includes the **Citizens' Utility Board**, **AARP**, **OSPIRG**, the **Renewable Northwest Project**, **Oregon Action**, the **NW Energy Coalition**, local com-

Coalition Hires New Outreach Director

I'm thrilled to join the Coalition at a time of such challenge and opportunity in the energy field. While this is my first job directly relating to energy issues, I have worked in the environmental field for several years. I canvassed and interned for **New Jersey PIRG** and served as vice-chair of the state Board while earning my undergraduate degree at **Rutgers College**. I moved to **Washington, D.C.** immediately after graduating and went to work for a progressive media consultant for two years before moving to **Seattle**. My gleeful period of unemployment ended all too soon when I accepted a position as **Grassroots Organizer** for the **Sierra Club** in April of 1996.

photo by Alicia Healey

In my two plus years with Sierra Club, I helped build the local groups in western Washington and organized legislative, electoral, and educational campaigns on state and national issues. For the two years prior to joining NWEC, I was development director for the **Washington Toxics Coalition**. During that period, we nearly doubled the membership and significantly increased major donor income.

In my free time, I help elect environmentally friendly candidates as the political chair of **King County Conservation Voters** and spend as much time as possible backpacking, telemark skiing and playing ultimate frisbee.

P.S. — I look forward to working with all of you…*even the ones I've been warned about. (No names need be mentioned.)*

Membership & Outreach

CUB wins $10.2 million for Oregon ratepaters

After an eight-year battle before the Oregon state courts and legislature, the **Oregon Public Utility Commission (OPUC)**, the **Citizens' Utility Board (CUB)** and **Portland General Electric (PGE)** have settled their dispute over the defunct **Trojan** nuclear power plant. When the plant closed in 1992, OPUC ruled that PGE could continue earning profits as if the plant were still in operation. CUB challenged that ruling in court.

Under the recent settlement, PGE will forgo any additional profits on their investment in Trojan and immediately reduce rates. The rate reductions are projected to save consumers more than $10.2 million. In exchange, CUB has agreed not to ask the courts to force PGE to refund the profits already collected on Trojan. For more information, contact FCEC coordinator **Jeff Bissonette** at jbissonnette@igc.org.

MEIC looks out for ratepayers in buyout of power company's poles & wires

The **Montana Environmental Information Center (MEIC)** is suing the **Montana Electric and Gas Alliance (MEGA)** under the open government provisions in the state constitution. MEGA is negotiating to purchase and manage the entire **Montana Power Company** distribution system with public dollars. MEIC points out that the local governments which make up MEGA could not legally shield their bids from the public. They are using MEGA to cloak in secrecy their commitment of public funds .

MEIC believes the cities should openly condemn the distribution system and buy it at fair market value.

For more information, contact **Graden Oehlerich** with MEIC at gradeno@montana.com or call her at (406)721-3589.

Seattle steps up to the challenge of global warming

Seattle has taken two vital steps to help clean up the environment by promoting renewable energy. In observance of the 30th anniversary of **Earth Day**, the **Seattle City Council** with strong support from **Mayor Paul Schell** passed a resolution directing the City to curb its greenhouse gas pollution.

Highlights of the City's 6-point plan include:

— meeting as much of the City's growing demand for electricity as possible through energy conservation and investment in new renewable resources;

— ensuring that all new City facilities of greater than 5,000 square feet are built to maximize energy and water use; and

— reducing vehicle emissions by transitioning the City fleet to alternative fueled vehicles.

Seattle City Light announced earlier that it will fill approximately half of its new demand for electricity (100 megawatts) with renewable energy.

Groups push Idaho Power on clean energy

In response to a power supply shortage projected for 2004, **Idaho Power (IP)** is seeking another 250 megawatts of electricity, enough energy to power half the city of **Spokane**, Washington. The company has no plans to up its investments in energy conservation or new renewable sources. The **NW Energy Coalition** and **Idaho Rivers United** are pushing IP to make clean energy a major component of its new power strategy.

When the **Idaho Public Utility Commission (IPUC)** issued an order limiting the amount that IP could invest in energy conservation this summer, the company capped its investments in low-income weatherization.

The **NW Energy Coalition**, **South Central Community Action Agency** and the **Southeast Idaho Community Action Agency** are pressuring the IPUC to allow the utility to restore its investments in low-income weatherization.

From The Director

photo by Doug Howell

An Energy Future Fit For Rachel Rose

Rachel Rose Howell was a little over 24 hours old when her father took this photo of the two of us. She is the newest Coalition baby, born to our Policy Director, Nancy Hirsh on September 27. As new babies do, Rachel reminds us why we work so hard for a clean and affordable energy future. For a moment, she is all babies, all new life: humans and smolts and saplings. She shows us the power of renewal and the hope of new beginnings.

Rachel Rose arrives in the region at a time of new beginnings for energy conservation and clean renewable energy. The region has woken up to the sudden need for new electrical resources. Unwise reliance on a semi-deregulated electricity market has brought the Northwest and California to the brink of blackouts this spring and summer. Rather than wasting our breath saying we told them so, we must take this opportunity to use the strength, diversity and wisdom of our Coalition to meet the crisis. Energy conservation and clean new renewable energy from wind and geothermal sources are the practical, affordable and CLEAN solutions. If the region insists on building gas fired generation, we must insist on mitigation of the global climate impacts and local pollution from that increasingly costly and uncertain solution.

At the same time, we will need all of the mutual support of our Coalition to make sure that the opponents of salmon restoration cannot use the energy crisis as an excuse to avoid bypass of the four Lower Snake River dams. We do not have to give up clean air and water or fish and wildlife or a stable climate for electricity. Independent science and the NRDC/NWEC study, *Going with the Flow: Replacing Energy from Four Snake River Dams*, convincingly demonstrate that we can have clean energy and wild

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Yes, I Want To Join the NW Energy Coalition!

so that future energy choices made for the public are also made by the public

*For **organizational membership information**, please contact the Energy Coalition office. Inquiries about **business or institutional subscriptions** to the NW Energy Coalition Report also should be directed to the Energy Coalition office.*

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