

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Dec. 11, 2014
John Dobken, Public Affairs, 509-377-8369
Anna Markham, Public Affairs, 509-377-8162

News Release 14-27
Page 1 of 3

Columbia Generating Station marks 30 years of public power generation

RICHLAND, Wash. – On Saturday, Dec. 13, Columbia Generating Station will mark 30 years of producing clean, reliable and cost-effective energy for the Northwest. During that time, Columbia has sent more than 214,000,000 megawatt hours to the power grid, power that is provided at-cost to the Bonneville Power Administration. Ninety-two Northwest utilities receive a share of Columbia's output.

Columbia, like the nuclear energy industry as a whole, has seen its performance strengthen over time. In recent years, Columbia has set records for both safety and generation.

In 2012, Columbia set a calendar year record by producing 9.3 million megawatt hours of electricity. The following year, a record was set for a refueling outage year, in which Columbia is taken off-line for a month to refuel the reactor and perform maintenance. Still, Columbia produced 8.4 million megawatt hours of electricity. For fiscal year 2014, Columbia set yet another generation record: more than 9.7 million megawatt hours sent to the grid.

Columbia is currently in its longest continuous operational run, breaking the record of 505 days set in April 2011. Columbia has been online for 534 consecutive days and counting. It has been more than five years since the plant had an unplanned shutdown.

“For 30 years, Columbia has been a vital, affordable energy resource for the Northwest,” said Mark Reddemann, Energy Northwest CEO. “Through our commitment to excellence in performance, the plant is well-positioned to bring competitive value to our region, and to break more generation and other performance records, during the next 30 years. The EN team is making it happen.”

While Columbia's power generation is increasing, the costs to regional ratepayers continue to decline, having a direct impact on the BPA rate case. Regional power organizations – and Washington Governor Jay Inslee – have praised Columbia for its economic and environmental value.

Most recently, the Bonneville Power Administration credited Energy Northwest with helping to keep the fiscal year 2016-2017 power rate increase in the single digits.

(more)

Columbia Marks 30 Years of Operation

2 of 3

According to Bonneville last week, opportunities and initiatives presented by Energy Northwest will save ratepayers approximately \$125 million during the upcoming rate period.

Those opportunities afforded by Energy Northwest, and its industry and regional partners, were the repeal of the spent-fuel disposal fee that the Energy Department charged Columbia Generating Station, saving the region on average \$7.4 million a year; refinancing of regional cooperation debt for 2014-17, saving about \$29 million a year; and a decrease in Columbia's operating costs, saving approximately \$26 million a year.

The agency's 2012 low-cost, below-market nuclear fuel purchase – enough fuel to last through 2028 – generated tens of millions of dollars in current rate case savings, and will save tens of millions more through 2028.

“Columbia brings value as a unique, firm, baseload, non-carbon emitting generation resource with predictable costs,” Reddemann said. “Working with our partners, we have built on that to the benefit of the region's ratepayers.”

The region's Public Power Council earlier this year determined that during 2001 alone, at the height of the Northwest energy crisis, “the operation of [Columbia] compared to the market saved BPA ratepayers \$1.4 billion.” A separate and independent study also estimates that going forward Columbia will save Northwest customers at least \$1.7 billion compared to the next best power option – combined-cycle natural gas – during the 30 years remaining in its approved operating life.

Since nuclear energy is carbon-free, Columbia annually prevents 4.4 million metric tons of CO₂ from entering the atmosphere when compared to the Northwest energy mix, and more than 3.6 million metric tons when compared directly to natural gas.

Columbia, a boiling water reactor, saw its first fuel loaded into the reactor core on Dec. 25, 1983. After a period to test systems and components, Columbia was cleared to begin commercial operation, sending its first power to the Northwest grid on Dec. 13, 1984. But the Columbia story began long before that.

In the late 60s and early 70s, regional power organizations anticipated an annual six to seven percent growth rate for electrical power demand, and the Bonneville Power Administration predicted shortfalls in generation, and a pending national energy crisis.

(more)

In response, Project 2 was to be the first of five nuclear power plants built in Washington and ground was broken in 1972. But by the end of 1980, drastically lowered load forecasts, conservation programs, and a depressed economy eliminated the economic justification for five nuclear projects. Those factors, coupled with cost overruns and construction delays that generated an enormous growth in the total amount of financing needed to complete the other projects, eventually led to a halt of construction.

That was more than a generation ago. Project 2 emerged as the vital energy resource it was meant to be, and in 1999, it was renamed Columbia Generating Station.

About Energy Northwest

Energy Northwest develops, owns and operates a diverse mix of electricity generating resources, including hydro, solar and wind projects – and the Northwest’s only nuclear energy facility. These projects provide enough reliable, affordable and environmentally responsible energy to power more than a million homes each year, and that carbon-free electricity is provided at the cost of generation. As a Washington state, joint operating agency, Energy Northwest comprises 27 public power member utilities from across the state serving more than 1.5 million ratepayers. The agency continually explores new generation projects to meet its members’ needs. Energy Northwest – www.energy-northwest.com.



#