



## PPC and Consumer-owned Power in the Northwest

September 2015

The Public Power Council serves a unique role as the forum where consumer-owned electric utilities come together to create consensus and advocacy on issues impacting regional power supply. Since 1966, the PPC has represented the interests of the consumer-owned utility customers of the Bonneville Power Administration in all BPA-related matters. PPC brings technical capability to the table with a team of experts in utility law, power systems, economics, and government affairs.

Membership in PPC is open to all “preference” customer electric utilities in the Columbia River Basin. The utilities range in size from 10 to 400,000 customers, and are located in parts of seven western states—Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming.

These utilities are public or peoples utility districts, municipal, cooperative, or mutual organizations. Collectively, they are often referred to simply as “publics,” “public agencies,” “public power,” and “publicly owned utilities.” They have varying legal structures, but they are all consumer-owned, nonprofit, and locally controlled.

In recognition of the crucial role electricity plays in modern life, consumer-owned utilities reflect two important principles. First, local citizens have a right to own and control the means necessary to provide electricity for their communities. Second, a community availing itself of this right to ownership and control has an obligation to do so reliably, efficiently and *at cost*.

### Community Priorities

Community ownership of electric service means local people working together to meet local needs. In the Northwest, consumer-owned power energizes the most remote rural areas and lights the largest urban centers. It powers large industrial operations, small residential dwellings, and everything in between.

The public invests its trust in consumer-owned utilities and they in turn take on an obligation to help advance the values in their community. Among these values today are energy efficiency, stewardship of the environment, and community service.

Public power plays a major role in the Northwest’s decades-long reputation as a national leader in the area of conservation. In their own service territories and in partnership with other organizations and agencies in the region, publicly owned utilities offer aggressive conservation programs and they continue to explore new technologies and build new paths to deliver cost-effective and innovative energy efficiency measures and services.

Consumer-owned utilities are committed to developing clean and renewable resources to augment the hydroelectric backbone of the region's electricity system. They have invested in wind energy and hydro power upgrades, and some have been active in emerging technologies like solar and tidal power. Many also offer their customers a billing option that helps to fund more renewable energy development.

Public power also makes an enormous investment annually in protecting the region's fish and wildlife resources. The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), which supplies wholesale power to most publics, spends hundreds of millions of public power customers' dollars every year on its fish and wildlife program. In addition, many individual utilities make direct expenditures for fish and wildlife enhancement, not to mention for clean water, habitat protection and environmental awareness and education.

A spirit of community service is fundamental to public power's nonprofit, local-control philosophy. Nearly all regional public utilities offer a range of programs such as helping low income customers to pay their bills and weatherize their homes. Many have educational and grant programs that supplement the work of local school districts.

### **Consumer-owned Utilities and Preference**

As entities owned by the citizens and providing benefit to the public, consumer-owned utilities have a legal first right to federal power. They are afforded this priority access to federal power generation and transmission through a legal principle called "public preference." Most members of PPC buy much or all of their power from the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), whose key mission is to deliver the clean, renewable hydropower that is generated at federal dams to the region's nonprofit, consumer-owned electric utilities.

Preference was first applied to consumer-owned electric systems in the Reclamation Act of 1902, which gave municipalities preferred access to surplus power from federal irrigation projects. Congress granted preference to ensure that the benefits of federal power were passed through to the public at the lowest possible cost, something only consumer-owned utilities could assure. Another reason was to help extend these benefits to the remote areas of the nation served only by consumer-owned utilities. And, preference was a means of preventing the monopolization of federal power by private interests.

Public preference is emphasized in the 1937 Bonneville Project Act, which authorized completion of Bonneville Dam, creation of BPA, and the construction of federal power lines to transmit the power as widely as practicable. The Bonneville Project Act specifically declares that preference be provided to publicly owned systems to ensure that hydropower projects are operated for the benefit of the general public, particularly residential and rural customers. These principles are just as relevant today, and the preference rights have been affirmed in subsequent laws impacting the Northwest power system, such as the Regional Power Act passed in 1980 ("Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act").

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# PPC Members 2015

## COOPERATIVES

Blachly-Lane County Electric Cooperative, *Oregon*  
Central Electric Cooperative, *Oregon*  
Clearwater Power Company, *Idaho*  
Columbia Rural Electric Assoc., *Washington*  
Consumers Power, Inc., *Oregon*  
Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative, *Oregon*  
Fall River Electric, *Idaho*  
Flathead Electric, *Montana*  
Glacier Electric Cooperative, *Montana*  
Harney Electric Cooperative, *Oregon*  
Hood River Electric Cooperative, *Oregon*  
Idaho County Light & Power, *Idaho*  
Inland Power & Light, *Washington*  
Kootenai Electric Cooperative, *Idaho*  
Lakeview Light and Power, *Washington*  
Lane Electric, *Oregon*  
Lincoln Electric, *Montana*  
Lost River Electric Cooperative, *Idaho*  
Midstate Electric Cooperative, *Oregon*  
Missoula Electric Coop, *Montana*  
Okanogan County Electric Coop, *Washington*  
Oregon Trail Elec. Cooperative, *Oregon*  
Peninsula Light Company, *Washington*  
Raft River Electric, *Idaho*  
Ravalli County Electric Cooperative, *Montana*  
Salem Electric, *Oregon*  
Umatilla Electric, *Oregon*  
United Electric, *Idaho*  
Vigilante Electric Cooperative, *Montana*  
Wasco Electric, *Oregon*  
West Oregon Electric, *Oregon*  
Wells Rural Electric Cooperative, *Oregon*

## MUNICIPALS

City of Ashland, *Oregon*  
City of Bandon, *Oregon*  
City of Blaine, *Washington*  
City of Bonners Ferry, *Idaho*  
Canby Utility, *Oregon*  
City of Cascade Locks, *Oregon*  
Centralia City Light, *Washington*  
Cheney Electric Service, *Washington*  
Eugene Water & Electric Board, *Oregon*  
City of Forest Grove, *Oregon*  
Idaho Falls Power, *Idaho*  
McMinnville Water & Light, *Oregon*  
Milton-Freewater City Light & Power, *Oregon*

## Municipals (cont.)

Monmouth Power & Light, *Oregon*  
Richland Energy Services, *Washington*  
Port of Seattle, *Washington*  
Rupert Electric Dept., *Idaho*  
Seattle City Light, *Washington*  
Springfield Utility Board, *Oregon*  
City of Sumas, *Washington*  
Tacoma Power, *Washington*  
Vera Water & Power, *Washington*

## PUDs

Asotin PUD, *Washington*  
Benton PUD, *Washington*  
Central Lincoln PUD, *Oregon*  
Chelan County PUD, *Washington*  
Clallam County PUD, *Washington*  
Clark Public Utilities, *Washington*  
Clatskanie PUD, *Oregon*  
Columbia River PUD, *Oregon*  
Cowlitz PUD, *Washington*  
Emerald PUD, *Oregon*  
Ferry County PUD, *Washington*  
Franklin PUD, *Washington*  
Grant County PUD, *Washington*  
Grays Harbor PUD, *Washington*  
Jefferson PUD, *Washington*  
Kittitas County PUD, *Washington*  
Klickitat PUD, *Washington*  
Lewis County PUD, *Washington*  
Mason County PUD #1, *Washington*  
Mason County PUD #3, *Washington*  
Northern Wasco PUD, *Oregon*  
Okanogan PUD, *Washington*  
Pacific County PUD #2, *Washington*  
Pend Oreille PUD, *Washington*  
Skamania County PUD, *Washington*  
Snohomish County PUD, *Washington*  
Tillamook PUD, *Oregon*  
Wahkiakum PUD, *Washington*  
Whatcom County PUD #1, *Washington*

## TRIBAL-OWNED

Yakama Power, *Washington*