

First Annual Meeting features remarks from BPA's Steve Wright

It was a dark and stormy night, but members and friends of Northwest RiverPartners disregarded the challenging weather and attended the organization's First Annual Meeting, Nov. 2.

Bonneville Power Administration Administrator Steve Wright provided the keynote remarks, observing that the two largest cost drivers on BPA's system are generation to serve increased load and fish mitigation costs. "As we move to tier our rates, generation costs are less of an issue, but fish costs are the greatest uncertainty."

Wright said, "BPA has a clear, statutory mandate to mitigate for damage to fish and wildlife caused by federal hydro, and we intend to be successful at that mission."

He added that the Oregon District Court is saying that the current balance is wrong, but isn't saying what the right balance is. The court is demanding a state/tribal/federal collaboration and is inviting a consensus decision consistent with the law.

"The issue is big, and BPA cannot handle it by itself on behalf of ratepayers." Wright said. "I think it's clear that we're not going to get out of the courtroom with costs lower than today. The question is how much and will it be effective? That's where groups like RiverPartners are important: it's pushing for effectiveness and efficiency, and is working to create solutions that restore salmon at an affordable price."

Chair Jean Ryckman, Franklin PUD, presided over the short business meeting that included approval of by-laws and election of Steering Committee members. RiverPartners Executive Director Terry Flores talked about the accomplishments of the organization, and its valuable partnerships.

Steering Committee Members re-elected at the meeting are: Ryckman; Kay Gabriel, vice chair, Weyerhaeuser; Ken Canon, ICNU; Tim Culbertson, Grant PUD; John Saven, NRU; Larry LaBolle, Avista; and, Jack Speer, Alcoa. Newly elected to the Steering Committee are: Steve Klein, Snohomish PUD; and Scott Corwin, PNGC; replacing outgoing members: Steve Eldrige, Umatilla PUD; and, Jim Sanders, Benton County PUD.