

Green Dams, Blue Skies campaign underway

Supporters of our region's hydrosystem have launched a year-long education effort to trumpet the benefits of having a clean, reliable and low-cost energy resource in our own backyard.

Green Dams, Blue Skies shines a spotlight on all the benefits of the Northwest's working rivers, including power generation, transportation, irrigation, recreation and fish and wildlife habitat. Members of Northwest RiverPartners, a coalition of regional businesses, utilities, farmers, ports and other river users, are leading the campaign.

Northwest RiverPartners is calling on individuals, businesses and organizations to sign on to support and sponsor this campaign. There are many decisions currently being made about the future of the dams, and proponents of clean, renewable energy need to be aware of what's at stake.

Specifically, the campaign seeks to build understanding among federal and local legislators, regional decision makers, businesses, RiverPartners' members and the general public of hydro's many benefits and critical importance to the region's economic health.

"There's often a tendency to take a good thing for granted and it's vital that we recruit vocal support for hydropower," explained Terry Flores, Northwest RiverPartners' executive director. "At a time when fish runs are improving, and hydro's essential role in providing our region clean, renewable and affordable electricity, there is plenty of good news to share."

New poll reveals Northwest voter attitudes about dams, energy and fish

There's every indication that ***Green Dams, Blue Skies*** will reach receptive ears, as a recent three-state poll commissioned by Northwest RiverPartners shows that citizens overwhelmingly understand and appreciate the value of the region's dams.

Six hundred Washington, Oregon and Idaho registered voters were surveyed in late February and early March 2007, measuring attitudes toward issues related to Northwest dams, energy and salmon. Pollster Tim Hibbitts, of Davis, Hibbitts & Midghall, Inc., conducted the survey.

Poll respondents named hydropower, which supplies 60 percent of the region's electricity, as the most practical source of energy for the Pacific Northwest. Also, hydro was named a renewable source of energy by 86 percent of the poll's respondents, placing it on a similar footing as wind and solar power, which were tied at 94 percent. However, respondents understand that wind is less reliable because it only generates electricity when the wind is blowing. Still, hydro is a natural partner for the region's growing wind industry, since it can fill in during times when the wind isn't blowing hard enough or at all.

“When asked which of the six sources of energy was the most practical for the Northwest to rely on, hydropower was the very clear favorite at 58 percent,” Hibbitts said. “Wind power finished a distant second at 21 percent, nuclear was third at just 10 percent, followed by solar at eight percent, with both natural gas-fired and coal-fired plants at two percent or less.”

According to Flores, “The hydro system already is being operated to give top priority in almost all circumstances to fish passage and survival. *Green Dams, Blue Skies* is working to make everyone more aware of the improvements that have been made, and will continue to be made, at the dams and in hydro operations on behalf of salmon.”

To register support for the Green Dams, Blue Skies campaign, go to www.nwriverpartners.org and click on the Green Dams, Blue Skies logo. For more information, call Northwest RiverPartners at 503-274-7792, or email Ruthann Mogen at mogen7944@msn.com.