

BPA NEWS

BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION
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Pacific lamprey return to Umatilla River in record numbers

PORTLAND, Ore. – Pacific lamprey, a prehistoric fish native to the Columbia River Basin and treasured by Native American people, are returning to Oregon’s Umatilla River in record numbers.

From the late 1960s through the early 2000’s lamprey were functionally extinct in the Umatilla Basin, and less than five years ago, only a few-hundred Pacific lamprey returned to the Umatilla River each year. However, through efforts such as adult translocation, scientists with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation have counted more the 2600 of the ancient fish migrating up the eastern Oregon river to spawn this spring.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla have worked for nearly 25 years to increase lamprey numbers. The Bonneville Power Administration has funded most of the tribe’s lamprey projects since the early 1990’s, with much of the money going toward lamprey research and improving instream passage. Over the past 10 years, BPA ratepayers have invested just over \$5 million in the Umatilla Basin for lamprey.

“Lamprey are culturally important and a critical First Food for tribes. And while they’ve been around for millions of years, until rather recently, managers failed to understand their importance within the food web,” says Aaron Jackson, fisheries biologist with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. “Our focus now is to continue lamprey supplementation actions to bolster the overall numbers of lamprey in the Umatilla and other ceded area basins.”

“We understand the cultural significance of Pacific lamprey to the tribes which is one reason we’ve funded lamprey projects in the Umatilla,” says Lorri Bodi, vice president of Environment, Fish and Wildlife with the Bonneville Power Administration. “As a food source for other creatures, lamprey are also very



important to a healthy functioning ecosystem such as in the Umatilla River so it's great to see our efforts paying off."

Pacific lamprey spend the majority of their lives as tiny larvae living in Northwest streams from three to seven years before migrating out to sea. Adult lamprey have a sucker-like mouth that allows them to be parasitic while in the ocean. They attach to fish and other marine mammals for feeding. Lamprey usually live in the ocean for one to three years before returning to fresh water to spawn. Similar to salmon, lamprey die after spawning and their carcasses provide marine rich nutrients to streams.

About BPA

The Bonneville Power Administration, headquartered in Portland, Oregon, is a nonprofit federal power marketer that sells wholesale electricity from 31 federal dams and one nuclear plant to 142 Northwest electric utilities, serving millions of consumers and businesses in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, western Montana and parts of California, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming. BPA delivers power via more than 15,000 circuit miles of lines and 260 substations to 511 transmission customers. In all, BPA markets about a third of the electricity consumed in the Northwest and operates three-quarters of the region's high-voltage transmission grid. BPA also funds one of the largest fish and wildlife programs in the world, and, with its partners, pursues cost-effective energy savings and operational solutions that help maintain affordable, reliable and carbon-free electric power for the Northwest. www.bpa.gov

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