

## Idaho Creates New Energy Resources Office

Idaho Gov. Butch Otter has created the Office of Energy Resources within the Governor's office.

Otter said the new agency would give his office more direct control over the state's energy policies.

The new office replaces the Idaho Energy Division of the Department of Water Resources.

Paul Kjellander was named to lead the new office. He was previously president of the state's Public Utilities Commission.

"It is the responsibility of state government to explore energy production and employ measures to reduce wasteful, uneconomical and unnecessary uses of energy, which diminish Idaho's energy resources," Otter said in the executive order creating the new office.

The original office was created in 1974. ■

## Exchange Payments May Be Resumed

Many Pacific Northwest electric customers would see lower electricity bills next October under a tentative deal that reallocates the benefits of the cheap hydropower sold in the region by the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).

But it is unclear if public power utility customers in the Northwest would also see a rate reduction, the Oregonian reported.

Advocates for private and public utilities reached an agreement in November that would reinstate BPA payments to

private utilities, which were suspended last May, at about 65 percent of their previous level.

That could mean a rate reduction of about 7 percent for customers of Portland General Electric and Pacific Power, after the same customers were hit with a 13-percent increase in May after a federal court ruled BPA has overpaid private utilities.

Since 1980, BPA was required to share the benefits of the federal hydroelectric system. It did so through a program called the residential exchange.

Public utilities sought relief through federal court from the methodology used to calculate the exchange benefits, which caused their rates to increase. The court ruled in favor of public utilities, causing BPA and the parties to negotiate a new payment process.

The Oregonian said details were being worked out on what affect the deal will have on public utilities.

Under the deal, BPA would resume payments next October of between \$200 million and \$225 million a year. ■

## Utilities Tap Into Geothermal Power Option

Two electric cooperatives in the region are embarking on geothermal projects to develop renewable energy in their service territories.

Naknek Electric Association in Dillingham, Alaska, has outlined a plan to reduce retail electric prices by replacing dozens of isolated diesel generators

with central station geothermal power.

Construction of a 25-megawatt geothermal plant, 425 miles of transmission line and 17 or 18 substations will begin next winter, with a 2009 or 2010 completion date.

The first phase will serve Naknek, Dillingham and four or five of the villages

the co-op serves.

Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative in Portola, California, taps into geothermal power as an associate member of the Northern California Power Agency.

The co-op says about 5 percent of its power mix came from geothermal last year. ■

## Third Weir To Aid Fish Passage at Snake River Dam

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently installed a removable spillway weir at Lower Monumental Dam on the lower Snake River, the third such weir installed in a partnership with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA).

BPA will repay 94.1 percent of the Corps' \$15

million capital cost for the Lower Monumental project in Eastern Washington as part of its work to improve juvenile fish passage through the hydropower system.

The weir is the third of four planned at Snake River dam facilities, which allow fish to bypass the dam near the surface.

BPA says spillway weirs at Lower Granite Dam and Ice Harbor Dam, also in Washington, showed a 96 percent to 98 percent survival rate for fish to pass through them.

The agencies plan to fix spillway weirs or equivalent systems at all eight lower Columbia and Snake river dams by 2009. ■