

Fish Runs Improve with Big Investments

Northwest families and businesses are spending billions of dollars, paid through their electricity bills, to improve conditions for Columbia River salmon and steelhead. And the results are bearing fruit – a dramatic improvement in the number of returning fish.

In the last decade, record numbers of adult fish have returned from the ocean to their spawning grounds in the Columbia River Basin. In fact, there are more fish in the Columbia River today than at any time since the first major dam – Bonneville -- was built in 1938.

The improved survival reflects a lot of things, including favorable conditions in the ocean. But it is also boosted by new structures at dams. Bypass systems and fish slides move young salmon around turbines and through the dams at survival rates of between 96 percent and 100 percent. Changes in the way dams operate – dedicating more water to help young fish swimming downstream in spring and summer instead of using it to generate power – have also helped and are very costly.

Programs to reduce predation by birds, sea lions and other aquatic animals add to the success story. And, habitat projects throughout the four Northwest states, funded by northwest utility customers, are restoring spawning and rearing areas and opening tributary channels to fish.

Since 1978, Northwest families and businesses have spent nearly \$12 billion on solutions to enhance fish runs and protect wildlife. As a customer of [\[add utility name\]](#), you are helping through your electricity bill. Fish and wildlife costs now make up 15 percent to 30 percent of the monthly bill.

Looking ahead, the federal salmon plan to aid the 13 salmon and steelhead runs listed under the Endangered Species Act includes even more habitat, hatchery and hydro actions at a cost that could approach \$1 billion per year. Some anti-dam activists say this isn't enough – we think it's plenty and, thanks to you, the hydro system is doing its part to protect and restore this Northwest icon!