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Northwest Dams: Renewable Bounty




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For salmon, our economy and quality of life

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The Northwest is rich in renewable energy resources.

While other regions of the country struggle to develop clean, sustainable energy supplies, dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers continue to turn moving water into electricity. The Northwest's abundant precipitation was tapped decades ago to provide a reliable, non-polluting source of power to light homes and fuel industry.

There is even more good news.

The dams that today generate most of the region's electricity are ideal building blocks for a greater renewable future that includes wind, solar, geothermal and wave-driven projects. The system of dams in the Northwest holds the key to a greener tomorrow.

Hydro is very flexible generation.

Its output can be increased and decreased at a moment's notice. This characteristic makes it an ideal backup for intermittent power sources like wind turbines.

When the wind slows down, hydropower can take up the slack.

Dams have already smoothed the way for thousands of megawatts of wind power to be brought into the Northwest's electricity grid. And the dams will play an important supporting role for the thousands more that are expected.

Electricity generation is one of the most visible and valuable functions of our dams in the Northwest.

But they do much more than produce electricity and support other renewable resources. They provide flood control, irrigation and recreation, as well as form the backbone of a navigable waterway that helps farmers and other businesses as far away as the Midwest.

The hydro system is, quite simply, the economic engine for the Northwest.

As the region continues to grow, the system will be pushed to its limits and new generation must be added to meet demand.

Fortunately, we have an abundance of untapped renewable energy resources.

As we develop these opportunities, the hydro system can provide the backup such resources need to be effective contributors to our power supply.

Northwest RiverPartners is joining with others to celebrate our renewable past, present and future.

Hydroelectric dams provide a source of energy that is sustainable, emits no greenhouse gases and leaves behind no waste. They are the original renewable energy source, providing the foundation for additional environmentally friendly resources that will serve the Northwest in the future.