Oregonians for Affordable Hydropower

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State of Oregon lawsuit sets potential BPA rate increase in motion for 1 million Oregon electricity customers

SALEM, ORE. - SEPTEMBER 17, 2026 – Today, the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) announced that it has begun rate proceedings that will likely increase power rates for Oregon utilities, following a federal lawsuit in which the State of Oregon secured a court order to increase water spill over dams instead of through power turbines. According to the announcement, the agency faces a $250 million revenue shortfall following the court order and will seek rate adjustments to recover the cost. BPA staff have indicated the adjustment could reach 6.3% for power sold to Oregon utilities.

"Oregonians deserve transparency about what's driving their electric bills higher," said Kyle Roadman, general manager of Emerald People's Utility District in Eugene. "The state's decision to join federal litigation affecting the Columbia River hydropower system carries real financial consequences. These are costs that non-profit utilities and our customers cannot simply absorb and that will ultimately show up in electric bills."

The federal lawsuit, joined by the Kotek administration, won a court order to divert water over the dams instead of through power-generating turbines. This reduces the amount of hydropower BPA can generate and sell, causing the agency to seek a rate adjustment to recover lost revenue necessary for its operations. BPA is the majority power supplier to consumer-owned utilities, which serve over 1 million Oregonians.

"Hydropower has kept Oregon's electricity affordable and reliable for decades, preventing the sprawling blackouts common in places like California and Texas," said Tony Schacher, general manager of Salem Electric. "Gov. Kotek's anti-hydropower lawsuit will cause higher bills, less reliability, and more reliance on fossil fuels. The cost burden will fall on the most vulnerable Oregonians, who will be left wondering if they should pay their electricity bill or cover other essential needs, like food or medicine."

These higher bills, most of which will hit utility customers this fall and winter, come at a time when Oregonians can least afford additional expenses. A 2026 State Treasurer's report found that 53% of Oregonians have had difficulty paying their bills and 73% have cut back spending due to rising costs.

About Oregonians for Affordable Hydropower

Oregonians for Affordable Hydropower is a coalition of not-for-profit, consumer-owned utilities across the state bringing awareness about the increase in electricity rates due to Gov. Kotek's federal hydropower lawsuit. Affected Oregonians include those who purchase energy from the state's rural electric cooperatives, municipal power districts and people's utility districts. To learn more about the campaign and why hydropower is essential for Oregon's power affordability, visit https://protecthydropower.com.

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