

Albany Democrat-Herald

Editorial: Wind wins and you lose

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Now the other shoe has dropped as the result of the wrongheaded policy of promoting, with subsidies, the development of massive amounts of wind power well before it is needed.

Wind power generation has seen big growth in eastern Oregon because the state and federal governments give it various breaks. But in order to get the breaks, the industry has to sell the power.

Last spring, the Bonneville Power Administration was forced to tell the wind generators to curtail their operations. The region produced too much hydropower because of the heavy snow melt and runoff. The transmission system could not handle it all.

The wind farm owners complained to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which now has told the BPA that it cannot do what it was forced to do last spring.

The normal thing would be to let the extra water run over the dams without going through the turbines. But that is said to create conditions harmful to the beloved salmon, so it is not allowed.

So the next time this situation comes up, the BPA is supposed to tell the snow to stop melting for a while? Or the skies to hold up on the rain? No, what it may be forced to do is to quit carrying cheap hydropower and transmit the far more expensive output of the wind farms.

It's not hard to see the effect: BPA will have to charge more to the public utilities it serves and the investor-owned utilities that get some of the output as well.

Who pays the higher price in the end? The consumer, that's who.

The state governments on the West Coast keep pushing for more "sustainable" power generation, which costs more than conventional sources such as hydro and coal.

If the politicians in the majority the last few years keep voting for higher prices in electricity, the voters should not be overly astonished if higher prices is what they get. (hh)