The Columbia River Treaty in Context

American Water Resources Association
Washington Section
September 2012
Columbia River Basin
Indigenous Fishery
Canneries and Navigation
Storage
Vanport City was built on a landfill now the site of Delta Park. By the end of World War II, about 19,000 people lived in its 5,300 houses, trailers, and barracks.

From Oregon Historical Society
Vanport residents—lucky to escape with their lives—were "put-up-in barracks and condemned trailers on Fruit Island and other sites all over town."

From Oregon Historical Society/Oregonian

Because of extraordinarily heavy spring runoff’s, Vanport was fifteen feet below Columbia River water level by the end of May 1948. On Memorial Day the dike broke. A wall of water wiped out the town, leaving almost 20,000 without homes and an estimated fifteen people dead.

From Oregon Historical Society
Major Dams of the Columbia River Basin
Treaty Dams
Columbia River Treaty

- 3 Dams in Canada
- 60 years of flood control: $65 million
- Canadian Entitlement
  - 30 year contracts: $254 million
  - Northwest-California Intertie
- Entities
  - U.S.:
    - The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) Administrator
    - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) Division Engineer, Northwestern Division
  - Canada:
    - British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority (BC Hydro)
Why is the CRT Under Review?

• Assured flood control expires September 16, 2024
• The earliest date of unilateral termination is September 16, 2024 with a minimum of 10 years notice required
• Changes have occurred since 1964
2014/2024 Review

Joint modeling by U.S. and Canadian Entities
U.S. Entity Modeling of Impacts on Fish
U.S. Process
   Sovereign Review Team
British Columbia Process
   Provincial Review Committee
      www.gov.bc.ca/columbiarivertreaty
Role of the Universities: Outreach, Engagement and Research

- Outreach
- Engagement
- Research
Outreach

• Symposia 1:
  – The Treaty and changes since 1964
    • Energy markets
    • Climate
    • Ecosystem health
    • Values, public expectations, community capacity
  – Models for Water Governance

• Symposia 2, 3, 4: A cross-border dialog
Energy Demand
Changes in Simulated April 1 Snowpack for the Canadian and U.S. portions of the Columbia River basin [Alan Hamlet, UW] (% change relative to current climate)

20th Century Climate          “2040s” (+1.7 C)          “2060s” (+ 2.25 C)

-3.6% -11.5% -21.4% -34.8% 21.4% 11.5%
Hydropower and Storage
Columbia River Chinook Salmon Harvest Records [C. Peery]
Values

Public Participation
Empowerment

CONSTITUTION ACT, 1982
PART II
RIGHTS OF THE ABORIGINAL PEOPLES OF CANADA

CRITFC

Columbia Basin Trust
Columbia Basin Trust
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Symposia 2, 3, 4

• Recognition of common interests led to a call for a forum for a cross-border dialogue
  – Symposium 2: Corvallis OR, 2010
  – Symposium 3: Kimberly BC, 2011
Engagement
Qualitative Interview Data

• Three Treaty Purposes:
  – Hydropower
  – Flood Risk Management
  – Ecosystem Function
    • Operate to mimic the natural hydrograph
    • Maintain high lake levels in the headwaters
    • Reintroduce salmon to Canada

• Greater Public Involvement in Implementation
Research

• Climate change
• Negotiation and public involvement processes
• Legal mechanisms for change,
• Governance in the face of uncertainty
To come to terms with the Columbia, we need to come to terms with it as a whole, as an organic machine, not only as a reflection of our own social divisions but as the site in which these divisions play out. If the conversation is not about fish and justice, about electricity and ways of life, about production and nature, about beauty as well as efficiency, and about how these things are inseparable in our own tangled lives, then we have not come to terms with our history on this river.

Richard White