

Touting CleanHydro

Educational campaign highlights economic and environmental benefits of rivers, dams

**By Terry Flores, executive director
Northwest RiverPartners**

The CleanHydro public education media campaign is under way. Thanks to the tremendous outpouring of support from Northwest cooperative utilities, other RiverPartners members, and regional and national organizations, we are taking our message about the power of dams and the Columbia and Snake river systems directly to the public through television and print advertising, articles and a CleanHydro website.

Coordinated by Northwest RiverPartners, the effort was initiated when public opinion surveys showed a significant lack of understanding and appreciation for the tremendous value the dams and the Columbia and Snake river systems mean to the Northwest, both economically and environmentally.

This is not so surprising when you consider changing demographics have ushered in a new audience. Many people have moved to the Northwest, and younger generations know little about hydropower and the river system's contributions. They didn't grow up with them.

Hydropower doesn't have the kind of ingrained recognition it once did.

While not surprising, it is a disturbing trend that needs to be addressed. With the CleanHydro effort, we are re-introducing—and reminding—the public of the tremendous value these resources bring to our daily lives.

Changing times also have led to hydropower being overlooked. We have seen huge growth in other renewable sources of energy, particularly wind. They have been so prominent in the popular media the perception rise is they are the only renewables out there.



We want to make sure hydropower is considered in the same context.

Executing an outreach effort of this scale took a great deal of hard work and never would have happened without the vision and leadership shown by the RiverPartners board members and their peers in the utility, business and trade organization worlds.

I find it especially uplifting that utility cooperatives, in particular, were some of the first to support the effort, even while TV ads are running in major westside markets outside their service areas.

We are running the ads there because our research showed the urban westside citizen tends to undervalue hydropower and the rivers, so that is where we need to focus our resources.

The two 30-second ads and print materials are educational and positive in nature and tone, and remain true to the spirit of utilities' service to the public. For example, they describe how hydropower provides jobs and keeps our skies clean, and how it accounts for 90 percent of the region's renewable energy.

These ads also capture the many benefits the system of dams and locks on the Columbia and Snake rivers bring to our everyday quality of life. They provide a powerful visual and a compelling story of how the region's river system allows farmers to feed our families and export goods to the world.

We have seen how successful a well-told story can be. Witness the "So God Made a Farmer" Super Bowl ad by Dodge.

While only 30 seconds as compared to

two minutes, our ads tell our story well and make an emotional connection to the audience.

The westside TV markets where the ads are running have a reach well beyond Seattle and Portland, covering almost all of western Washington and Oregon, as well as a significant range into the eastern parts of both states. Almost 4.5 million households will receive repeated reminders of how hydropower and our river system shape the Northwest in a positive way.

The ads will run through early summer. Utilities supporting CleanHydro can customize print advertising to fit their customer-direct communications, too.

I hope you take advantage of the work that has been done and help us spread the word as broadly as possible to ensure the effort is a rousing success.

The RiverPartners' team—in partnership with many local utility, business and trade leaders, and based on solid professional analysis and opinion research—are bringing hydropower back into the public conversation.

Meanwhile, the dams and the rivers continue to steadily do their job: producing clean, reliable, low-cost energy and a commerce system that is the envy of the world. They really do provide the foundation for the Northwest's economy, environment and overall quality of life.

We have a great story to tell, and with CleanHydro we are telling it. ■



Terry Flores



*With great power
comes great responsibility.*

Nearly everything we depend on wields the immense power of electricity. This bodes well for hydropower, because in the Northwest it provides 90 percent of our renewable energy. And it keeps 100 percent of our air clean.

CLEAN  HYDRO
CleanHydro.com