

(285 words)

## BPA and Alcoa: A Risky, Expensive Deal

For months, consumer-owned utilities have protested the Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) proposal to sell electricity to one aluminum company, Alcoa, under a long-term power sales contract. What upsets utilities and their customers is that BPA is not legally obligated to make this deal and is taking a risk that may only raise rates for all other customers.

BPA recently announced that it had agreed to a contract to provide electricity to Alcoa through May 2011, and possibly through 2016. What we're talking about is not a small amount of power, but the equivalent of one-quarter of what the City of Seattle uses going to just *one* company. This move by BPA is not fair and will harm members of consumer-owned utilities, such as Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative, Inc. (CCEC).

BPA faces too much risk in losing money on the contract. BPA's gamble of taking on the risk for one company jeopardizes the future of its other customers. BPA's justification for offering to sell electricity to Alcoa is that it will save Northwest jobs. We beg to differ. Trying to retain aluminum company jobs will mean that equally deserving workers in other Northwest communities risk losing their jobs due to higher electricity costs.

It is not BPA's job to decide which private sector jobs to favor. Its job is to provide the first "right" to low-cost power from hydroelectric dams on the Columbia River to residential and farm customers throughout the Northwest. The cost of these federally sponsored projects is still being paid for by co-op customers in your electricity bill.

Instead of placating one special interest, CCEC believes that BPA should focus on its core customers by providing low-cost electricity to residential and small business customers.