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http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Study-Savings-possible-by-shutting-down-nuclear-10948718.php

Study: Savings possible by shutting down nuclear power plant

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FILE--In this April 8, 2003, file photo, steam rises from Energy Northwest's Columbia Generating Station, Washington state's only nuclear power plant, near Richland, Wash. A new study says Pacific Northwest ratepayers could save hundreds of millions of dollars if the Bonneville Power Administration and Energy Northwest close the region's only commercial nuclear power plant and replace its output with renewable energy.

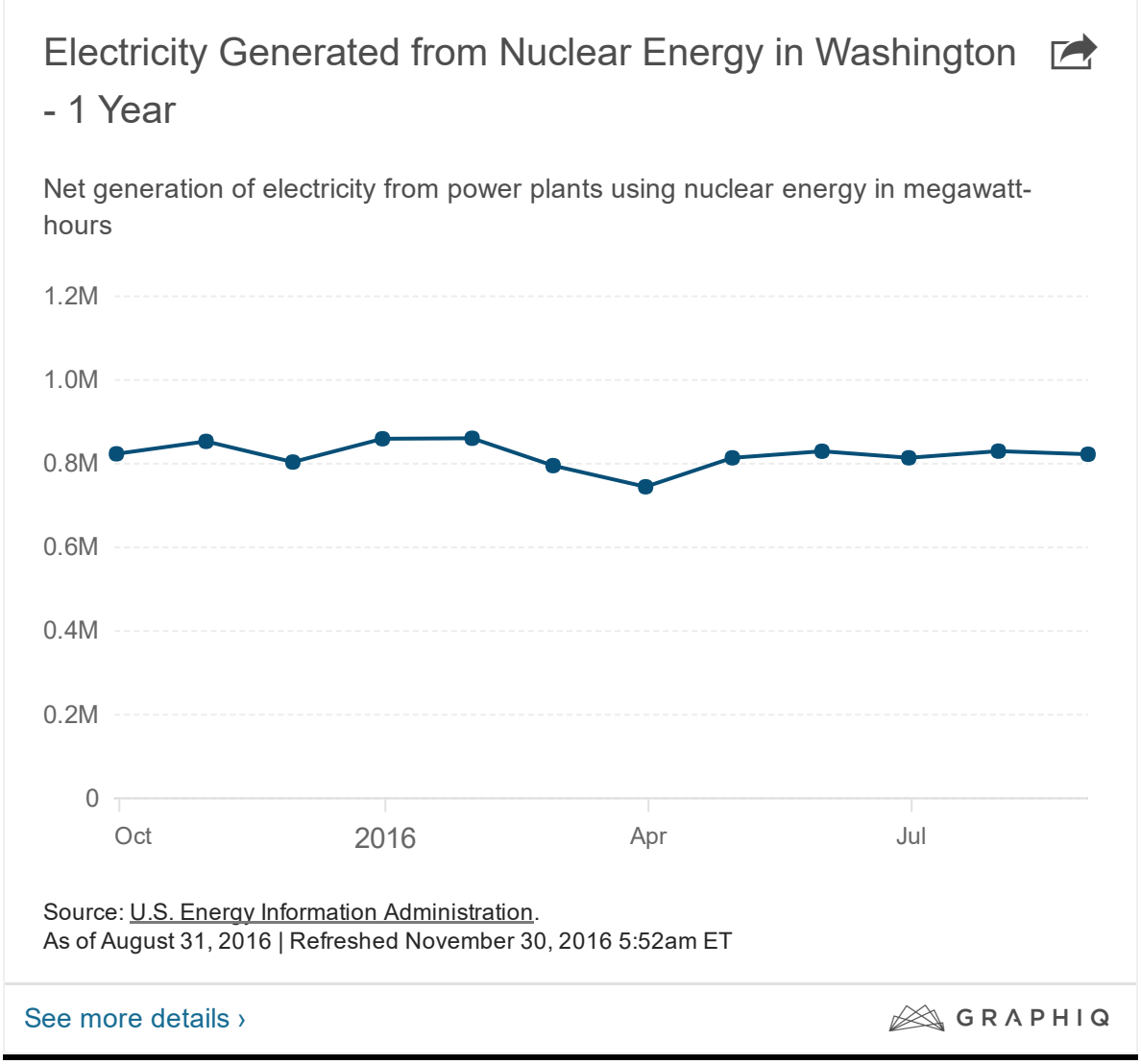
PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — A new study says Pacific Northwest utility ratepayers could save hundreds of millions of dollars if the Bonneville Power Administration and Energy Northwest close the region's only commercial nuclear power plant in Richland, Washington and replace its output with renewable energy.

The Portland-based McCullough Research consulting firm estimated savings from $261.2 million to $530.7 million over 10 years due to historically low renewable energy prices at the aging plant, The Oregonian/OregonLive (http://bit.ly/2lJ7Z7q) reported.

"The rapid drop in renewable energy costs in recent years has been shocking to everyone," said economist Robert McCullough. "It is now possible to affordably replace aging facilities ... without increasing the region's carbon footprint."

The report was commissioned by the anti-nuclear group Physicians for Social Responsibility and is the latest in a salvo against the economic feasibility and reliability of the aging Columbia Generating Station.

The station is all that's left of a plan to build five nuclear plants in the Northwest, a debacle that led to one of the largest municipal bond defaults in history. The Richland facility was the only one completed. It is an older design that has had a variety of operating issues. Federal regulators recently cleared it to run through 2043.



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Energy Northwest, a public utility consortium that operates the plant, criticized the report and told the newspaper that the 1,200-megawatt plant has set generating records in four of the past five years.

The consortium markets the power through the Bonneville Power Adminstration.

The study cited the low cost and abundant supply of renewable power. But the plant's supporters point out that supply differs from capacity — making sure that power is there when you need it.

"The report faults CGS for what makes it so valuable: We make electricity around-the-clock," said Mike Paoli, a spokesman for Energy Northwest. "With wind and solar, a lot of the generation happens at off-peak times. When peak demand comes, you have to have baseload generation to cover that."

Most experts note that the Northwest wholesale markets are awash in energy, but could soon go into a capacity deficit. Such a shortage could be exacerbated by the slated closure of three coal-fired plants in Oregon, Washington and Montana in 2020 and 2021.

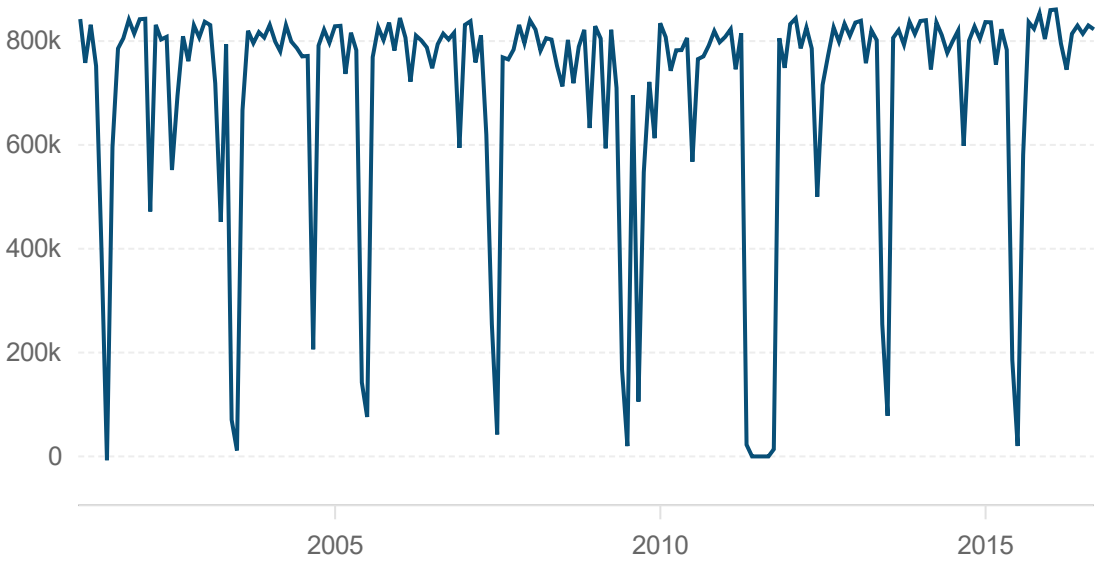
Kieran Connolly, Bonneville's vice president for generation and asset management, told the newspaper that the agency is dependent on the nuclear plant when water conditions are low at energy-producing dams.

He said some of the nuclear plants slated to close early, such as Diablo Canyon in California, were facing major new capital investments. That's not the case for the Columbia Generating Station, he said.

"Our customers' focus is on safely, reliably and cost effectiveness" in meeting electricity needs, he said. "They're not seeing it as a resource they are questioning. They just want to make sure it's well managed."

Electricity Generated from Nuclear Energy in Washington

Net generation of electricity from power plants using nuclear energy in megawatt-hours



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration.
As of August 31, 2016 | Refreshed November 30, 2016 5:52am ET

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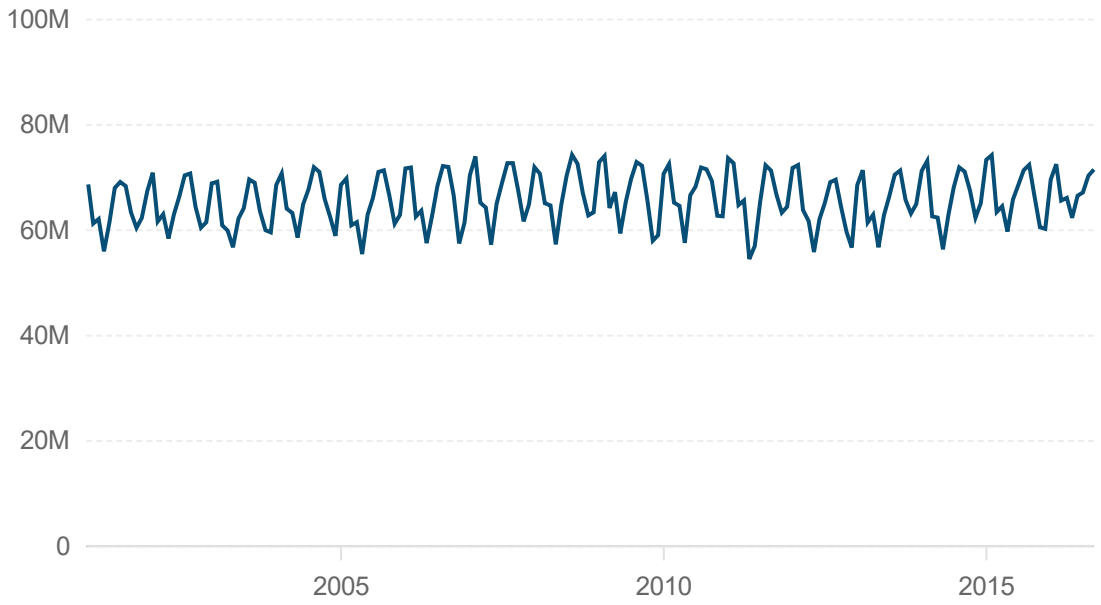
Electricity Generated from Nuclear Energy in the United States

Net generation of electricity from power plants using nuclear energy in megawatt-hours



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