A settlement with the Spokane tribe along the lines provided to the Colville tribes would likely necessitate a small increase in Bonneville’s rates for power. While the rate increase would amount to less than 20 cents per month per household, it comes at a time when (1) Bonneville’s customers have already absorbed rate increases, including those announced on October 1, 2003, of over 40 percent and (2) the economy of the northwestern region, Bonneville’s primary service area, is experiencing difficulties. However, the bulk of Bonneville’s obligations in any settlement similar to the Colville settlement will occur in the future, when the conditions causing Bonneville’s current financial difficulties—such as costly long-term contracts to purchase power from other suppliers—will probably have abated. Therefore, Bonneville’s current financial difficulties should not unduly influence current discussions about how to compensate the Spokane tribe.

A reasonable case can be made to settle the Spokane tribe’s case along the lines of the Colville settlement—a one-time payment from the U.S. Treasury for past lost payments for water power values and annual payments primarily from Bonneville. Bonneville continues to earn revenues from the Spokane Reservation lands used to generate hydropower. However, unlike the Colville tribes, the Spokane tribe does not benefit from these revenues. Spokane does not benefit because it missed its filing opportunity before the Indian Claims Commission. These efforts would Ultimately fail. Without congressional action, it seems unlikely that a settlement for the Spokane tribe will occur.