

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Klamath Dam Agreement Unveiled

Agreement Represents Giant Leap forward for Largest River Restoration Effort in History

Portland, OR – Today the 29 parties that have been negotiating the fate of the Klamath River Dams released the highly anticipated Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement (KHSA). In coming weeks Klamath Basin Tribes, counties, conservation groups, fishing groups, and farming and ranching organizations will consider the pros and cons of the Agreement and decide whether or not to support it. Already, several groups appear eager to support the Agreement and move forward with resolving what many have thought was the America's most intractable water war.

“Klamath communities are redefining what is possible in terms of large scale ecosystem restoration. The key to success is an approach that supports all of the Klamath's diverse rural communities,” said Chuck Bonham of Trout Unlimited.

The KHSA would be complemented by the implementation of a companion agreement, the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA). Whereas the KHSA focuses on the fate of PacifiCorp's lower four Klamath River Dams, the KBRA significantly increases water flows for fish, provides greater reliability of irrigation water delivery, undertakes Basin-scale habitat restoration, and makes critical economic investments to ensure the economic viability of Basin fishing and farming communities into the future.

“This Agreement represents a major step toward restoring the health of the Klamath River. We look forward to working with all Tribal, agricultural, and fishing communities in the Klamath Basin on implementing these solutions,” said Troy Fletcher, negotiator and Yurok Tribal member.

The KHSA provides a pathway that would lead to dam removal in 2020 following an analysis by the Secretary of the Interior to determine whether dam removal is indeed to the benefit of fisheries resources and in the public interest. In addition, the safety of dam removal must be scrutinized through a public environmental review process consistent with all applicable state and federal environmental laws.

“Of course we’d like to see the dams removed tomorrow, but the reality is we must make sure dam removal is as safe as preliminary assessments suggest and that it can be done cost effectively,” said Steve Rothert, California Director for American Rivers. “For a restoration action that is simply unprecedented in scale and scope, this is actually a reasonable timeline.”

The KHSA is based on the Agreement in Principle reached between PacifiCorp, Oregon, California, and the federal government in November of 2008. It provides for funding up to \$200 million in dam removal costs by collecting a surcharge from PacifiCorp’s Oregon and California customers over the next 10 years. Earlier this year, the Oregon legislature authorized the customer surcharge. If necessary, the State of California would provide up to \$250 million more towards the cost of removal with the total project costs not to exceed \$450 million.

Dam owner PacifiCorp appreciates the approach in the Agreement as well. PacifiCorp Chairman & CEO, Greg Able describes the agreement as a “balanced and reasonable outcome that best protects the interests of our customers, while achieving the policy objectives of the states and federal government, as well as helping to peacefully resolve numerous conflicts in the Klamath basin.”

The release of the proposed Agreement marks a significant shift in attitude for many in the basin. Over the past 20 years the Klamath has been marked by bitter and acrimonious debate. The various communities had targeted one another with lawsuits and protests, often marked by acts of civil disobedience, in a failure to truly resolve issues pertaining to water rights, river flows, and economic development.

“Once we decided to stop fighting and start talking, we realized the opportunities provided by collaboration and coalition building,” said Jeff Mitchell, council member for the Klamath Tribes of Oregon. “We haven’t seen salmon in our country for 90 years; this Agreement represents our best chance of finally bringing the salmon home to the Upper Basin.”

In coming weeks, participating governments and organizations will be considering whether to formally sign on to the Agreement. If a critical mass can be reached, the groups hope to introduce legislation to implement the companion agreements by the end of the year.

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Editor’s note: for a copy of the Klamath Hydropower Agreement and an Executive Summary, go to www.edsheets.com