

Building The Case for Dam Removal on the Klamath

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Pacificorp, a subsidiary of the large multinational power corporation Scottish Power, is in the process of relicensing its Klamath River dams. Since hydropower dams are relicensed only once every 30-50 years, relicensing represents a once in a lifetime opportunity to change flow regimes or decommission dams. The Karuk Tribe believes that the removal of dams on the Klamath should be fully evaluated as dam removal appears to be key in the restoration of native fishes to the upper basin.

Our position is supported by sound science and policy research.

These dams contribute little to the energy supply¹

The California Energy Commission (CEC) reviewed the energy affects of full or partial decommissioning. Their conclusions were that:

“Because of the small capacity of the Klamath hydro units...removal of these units will not have a significant reliability impact on a larger regional scale.”

The report went on to state:

“...decommissioning is a feasible alternative from the perspective of impacts to statewide electricity resource adequacy and that replacement energy is available in the near term.”

The National Academy of Science recommends a full evaluation of dam removal²

A recent report by the most prestigious scientific minds in America, the National Academy of Science, recommends that:

“serious evaluation should be made of the benefits to coho salmon from the elimination of Dwinell Dam [on the Shasta River] and Iron Gate Dam on the grounds that these dams block substantial amounts of coho habitat...”

The California State Water Resources Control Board calls for dam removal studies³

The California State Water Resources Control Board is one party involved in the relicensing of the Klamath Project. In response to PacifiCorp’s draft license application which made no mention of studying dam removal the Board wrote:

“The key to stopping the decline of salmon is the removal of dams and/or the protection and/or restoration of their spawning streams. Dam

¹ California Hydroelectricity Outlook Report, California Energy Commission (2002) p. D31.

² Endangered and Threatened Fishes in the Klamath Basin, National Academy of Sciences Committee on Endangered and Threatened Fishes in the Klamath River Basin (2003) p. 297.

³ Comments on PacifiCorp’s Draft Klamath Dams Hydrolicense Application, California State Water Resources Control Board (2003).

decommissioning therefore, must be an alternative fully evaluated in the application as mitigation for the water quality impacts.”

The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors joins call for dam removal studies⁴

The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors wrote to PacifiCorp stating that dam removal should be considered as part of its federal relicensing application. The letter went on to state:

“The board recognizes that decommissioning of any project is a difficult decision, but believes, in this day and age, that option should be seriously considered.”

The California Coho Recovery Strategy calls for dam removal studies⁵

In response to the listing of the Coho Salmon as an Endangered Species, the California Fish and Game Commission formed a Coho Recovery Team. Representing diverse interests, from the Cattlemen’s Association to commercial fishermen, the California Recovery Team has called for feasibility studies for removing all the dams between Klamath Falls and I-5. This includes Iron Gate, COPCO 1 and 2, J.C. Boyle, and Keno.

⁴ Board wants Klamath dam removals considered, Eureka Times-Standard, September 17, 2003.

⁵ Recovery Strategy for California Coho Salmon (Draft), CA Dept. of Fish and Game Coho Recovery Team, (2003).