

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

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**OREGON GOVERNOR SPEARHEADS LARGEST RIVER RESTORATION EFFORT
IN US HISTORY**

Ratepayer Protection measure funds dam removal, saves consumers money

Salem, OR – Today Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski signed into law SB 76, a bill that would provide more than \$180 million dollars for the pending removal of four Klamath River dams. Although bill will increase Oregon's Pacific Power residential utility customers' costs by an average of \$1.50 per month to raise dam removal funds, this option is cheaper than the alternative of retrofitting the dams to meet modern environmental requirements.

The action represents fulfillment of Oregon's commitment under a pair of agreements hammered out between a diverse group of stakeholders including Indian Tribes, salmon fishermen, conservation groups, dam owner PacifiCorp, along with state, federal and local governments over the course of several years. "Signing this bill into law is a critical step in ensuring that all of the Klamath's diverse rural communities have an economically viable future," said Governor Ted Kulongoski.

After years of experiencing a rotating crisis stemming from fisheries declines and irrigation shutoffs, Klamath River Tribes, Reclamation Project irrigators, and conservation groups initiated talks aimed at resolving complex disputes ranging from water rights and species conservation to economic development. The talks resulted in the forging of two companion agreements – the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement which features a water sharing plan between fisheries and agriculture and a strategy for

providing economic stability in affected communities -and a Hydropower Agreement between the company, California, Oregon and the federal government which creates a pathway for the removal of four dams on the river.

“Governor Kulongoski has supported those of us working on durable solutions since the beginning,” said Jeff Mitchell of the Klamath Tribes. “The governor’s leadership will enable us to bring the salmon home to Oregon for the benefit of Indians and non-Indians alike.”

In recent years declining runs of salmon on the Klamath – historically the West’s third most productive salmon river – have lead to commercial fisheries closures off the Oregon and California coasts. This has led to economic hardships for coastal fishing communities and denied Tribes access to a culturally important food source.

“We have worked hard to find a way to meet a variety of needs,” commented Steve Kandra, a Klamath Project farmer. “Once those of us who depend on the River made a commitment to work together instead of waging a fight that we all were losing, solutions emerged. Governor Kulongoski and members of the state legislature, especially Senator Jackie Dingfelder and Representative Ben Cannon, provided political leadership necessary to move these solutions forward.”

The Klamath stakeholders’ group still has a lot of work to do. The group is putting the final touches on both the Hydropower Agreement and the companion Restoration Agreement. After that, California legislation will be needed to fund the other portion of dam removal costs which could be as much as \$250 million. Finally, congressional approval will be needed to implement the agreements.

Despite the road ahead, the group remains optimistic and enthusiastic. According to Glen Spain, of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations, “We have a lot of work left to do, but we feel like we finally have the wind at our backs.”

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Editor’s notes: the current draft of the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement and Hydropower Agreement in Principle can be found at: <http://www.edsheets.com/Klamathdocs.html>