



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

AGENDA ITEM NO.

D-12

For the meeting of: July 19, 2016

Date: July 15, 2016

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Supervisor Ryan Sundberg and Supervisor Mark Lovelace

Subject: Letter to Bureau of Reclamation Requesting Preparation for Potential Late-Summer Flow Augmentation Releases from Lewiston Dam to Improve Fishery Conditions in the Lower Klamath River

RECOMMENDATION(S): That the Board of Supervisors authorizes the Chair to sign the attached letter to the Bureau of Reclamation.

SOURCE OF FUNDING: N/A

DISCUSSION:

Current projections indicate that by mid- to late-August, flows in the lower Klamath River could drop to levels that warrant careful consideration for flow augmentation releases from Lewiston Dam by the Bureau of Reclamation to address fishery needs. In particular, there is concern for the effects of the Ich pathogen on the fall run of Chinook salmon. The need for late-summer releases is best determined in mid-August based on real-time data and information in consultation with the Hoopa Valley Tribe, Yurok Tribe, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and California Department of Fish & Wildlife. Continued monitoring and evaluation of environmental conditions are needed to inform the decision whether releases are necessary to reduce the risk of a disease outbreak. Important factors include flows, water temperatures, fish density in thermal refuges, the presence and severity of Ich infections, and other stressors on fish. The effects of supplemental releases on run timing and other potential environmental impacts should also be considered. The attached letter requests that the Bureau of Reclamation prepare for flow augmentation releases with consideration for Humboldt County's statutory entitlement and contract right for water releases from the Trinity River Division of the Central Valley Project.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: N/A

Signature Mark Lovelace

Signature Ryan Sundberg

Prepared by Hank Seemann (Public Works)

REVIEW: Auditor County Counsel Personnel Risk Manager Other

TYPE OF ITEM: XX Consent Departmental Public Hearing Other

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No. C-3

Meeting of: May 19, 2015

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT Upon motion of Supervisor Seconded by Supervisor

Ayes Nays Abstain Absent

SEE ACTION SUMMARY

and carried by those members present, the Board hereby approves the recommended action contained in this Board report.

1 Dated:

By:

Kathy Hayes, Clerk of the Board

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT: Bureau of Reclamation, Hoopa Valley Tribe, Yurok Tribe, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish & Wildlife

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS: Board discretion

ATTACHMENTS: Letter to Bureau of Reclamation



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

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July 19, 2016

Mr. David Murillo, Regional Director
Mid Pacific Regional Office
Bureau of Reclamation
Federal Office Building
2800 Cottage Way
Sacramento, CA 95825-1898

Subject: Request to Prepare for Potential Late-Summer Flow Augmentation Releases from
Lewiston Dam to Improve Fishery Conditions in the Lower Klamath River

Dear Mr. Murillo:

The purpose of this letter is to request that the Bureau of Reclamation prepare for the potential need to implement flow augmentation releases from Lewiston Dam to address deteriorating conditions in the lower Klamath River and reduce the risk of a fish disease outbreak affecting the fall run of Chinook salmon. This request for the Bureau to prepare for flow augmentation releases is based on Humboldt County's statutory entitlement and contract right for water releases from the Trinity River Division of the Central Valley Project.

Humboldt County's water interests were incorporated into Proviso 2 of Section 2 of Public Law (PL) 84-386 (enacted in 1955), in which Congress specified that "not less than 50,000 acre-feet shall be released annually from the Trinity Reservoir and made available to Humboldt County and downstream water users." This obligation was formalized in Condition 8 of the water delivery contract executed on June 19, 1959, between the Bureau and Humboldt County and in subsequent water right permits issued to the Bureau by the State Water Resources Control Board. Humboldt County's first-priority right to water from Trinity Reservoir, prior to out-of-basin transfers to the Sacramento River in the Central Valley, was reaffirmed in the December 23, 2014 memorandum issued by the Office of the Solicitor for the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Late-summer conditions in the lower Klamath River have been an ongoing concern since the fish-kill event of 2002. Conditions in the lower Klamath River are severely impacted by the poor water quality and altered flow regime caused by PacifiCorp's four hydroelectric dams and the Bureau's Klamath Project. The Bureau has made supplemental releases with Trinity River water from Lewiston Dam during the last four years, associated with drought conditions, to reduce the risk of a disease outbreak. Proviso 2 of PL 84-386 provides authority for the Bureau to make flow releases that benefit the lower Klamath River. The Bureau is currently preparing a Long-Term Plan for Protecting Late Summer Adult Salmon in the Lower Klamath River, which

is intended to serve as a guide for flow augmentation decisions for fish protection purposes. Completion of this Long-Term Plan and the associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is expected in 2017. Humboldt County is a Cooperating Agency for the purpose of assisting the Bureau with preparation of the EIS in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

Increased precipitation during the winter of 2015-2016 was beneficial for reservoir storage, in-stream flows, and groundwater recharge. However, multiple years of drought have resulted in substantial water deficits and low-water conditions that will not recover quickly. Flows in several tributaries to the lower Klamath River continue to be well below long-term averages. Current projections indicate that by mid- to late-August, flows in the lower Klamath River could drop below levels that warrant careful consideration for flow augmentation releases to address fishery needs. In particular, there is concern for the effects of the Ich pathogen on the fall run of Chinook salmon if flows in the lower Klamath River drop below 2,800 cubic feet per second at the KNK gage.

The need for late-summer releases is best determined in mid-August based on real-time data and information. We support continued monitoring and evaluation of environmental conditions to inform the decision whether releases are necessary to reduce the risk of a disease outbreak. Important factors include flows, water temperatures, fish density in thermal refuges, the presence and severity of Ich infections, and other stressors on fish. The effects of supplemental releases on run timing and other potential environmental impacts should also be considered. We support continued consultation with the Hoopa Valley Tribe, Yurok Tribe, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish & Wildlife, and Humboldt County using an adaptive management approach based on the best available science.

We appreciate the Bureau's readiness for managing the Trinity River Division with consideration for the needs of Humboldt County and other downstream users and consistent with Humboldt County's contract rights.

Sincerely,



Mark Lovelace, Chair
Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

ML:kh

CC: Congressman Jared Huffman
Mike Orcutt, Hoopa Valley Tribe
Dave Hillemeier, Yurok Tribe
Nick Netrick, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Tony LaBanca, California Department of Fish & Wildlife