



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

Legislation Text

File #: 19-150, **Version:** 1

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Public Works

Agenda Section: Time Certain Matter

SUBJECT:

9:30 a.m. - Klamath Dam Removal Update

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Receive an update on efforts to remove the four lowermost dams on the Klamath River and information on the public meeting to be held in Arcata on February 6, 2019, regarding the draft Environmental Impact Report for the dam removal project; and
2. Authorize the Chair of the Board to sign the attached comment letter and transmit to Public Works for submittal to the State Water Resources Control Board.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

General Fund (1100251 Water Management)

DISCUSSION:

Within Humboldt County, the Klamath River passes through the communities of Orleans and Weitchpec, portions of the Hoopa Valley and Yurok Indian Reservations, and the aboriginal homelands of the Karuk Tribe. Although the mouth of the Klamath River is in Del Norte County, salmon fisheries along Humboldt County's 125 miles of coastline are largely dependent on the health and productivity of the Klamath River basin. The City of Eureka and the Port of Humboldt serve as an economic focal point with infrastructure for commercial and recreational fisheries. Commercial, recreational, and tribal fisheries are a vital part of Humboldt County's economy and core community values, and the county has a vested interest in protecting and restoring Klamath River fisheries.

Starting in 2006, the county actively participated in negotiations with state and federal agencies, tribes, local governments, irrigators, conservation groups, and the private utility company PacifiCorp to address water and fishery issues in the Klamath River basin. On February 9, 2010, the Board of Supervisors approved Resolution 10-11 which made the county a signatory to the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement ("KHSA") and Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement ("KBRA"). The KHSA provided terms for removal of the four lowermost dams on the Klamath River, while the KBRA addressed the balance of water use between agriculture and fisheries within the basin.

Congress did not take the actions necessary to authorize implementation of the KHSA and KBRA before they expired. In 2016, a new agreement which did not require congressional action was reached between federal agencies, the states of California and Oregon, and PacifiCorp. This new agreement resulted in an amendment to the KHSA and effectively terminated the KBRA. The amended KHSA directed the formation of the Klamath River Renewal Corporation which has applied to federal and state agencies, in conjunction with PacifiCorp, for permits and approvals to decommission and remove the four lowermost dams. This project implements the amended KHSA and is intended to return the majority of the Klamath River to free-flowing conditions for the benefit of fisheries and water quality.

On December 27, 2018, the State Water Resources Control Board (“SWRCB”) released the draft Environmental Impact Report (“EIR”) for the proposed certification of the project under Section 401 of the Clean Water Act. The SWRCB issued its draft certification in June 2018 but must analyze the project’s environmental impacts in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act before it can make a final decision on the certification. The SWRCB will incorporate the findings and recommendations from the final EIR into their certification for the project. The SWRCB is holding a public hearing on the draft EIR on February 6, 2019, starting at 5:00 pm at the D Street Neighborhood Center in Arcata. Comments are due by February 26, 2019.

The draft EIR can be found here:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/water_quality_cert/lower_klamath_ferc14803_deir.html

Craig Tucker, water resources consultant for Humboldt County, will provide an update on the draft EIR and the overall Klamath River dam removal process.

Public Works recommends that the Board approve the attached comment letter for submittal to the SWRCB.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Today’s recommendation will not impact the Humboldt County General Fund. Funds totaling \$6,500 to support involvement with the Klamath River dam removal process have been incorporated into the fiscal year 2018-2019 budget. The timeline for dam removal is uncertain, making it difficult to provide an impact for the entire project. The need for county involvement will likely fluctuate from year to year.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board’s Strategic Framework by providing for and maintaining infrastructure and creating opportunities for improved safety and health.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

State Water Resources Control Board

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

This item is informational.

ATTACHMENTS:

Comment Letter

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: G-1

Meeting of: May 31, 2016

File No.: N/A