

Plan to remove dams on Klamath River moves forward

November 20, 2020



California, Oregon and the Yurok and Karuk tribes announced an agreement to moved forward with removing for dams on the Klamath River and begin the largest river restoration in U.S. history.

The project, when completed, will address declines in fish populations, improve river health and renew Tribal communities and cultures.

The Memorandum of Agreement signed by the states of California and Oregon, the Yurok Tribe, the Karuk Tribe, PacifiCorp and the Klamath River Renewal Corporation describes how the parties will implement the amended Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement as negotiated and signed in 2016. The KHSA sets the terms for the removal of four Klamath River dams.

“The Klamath River is a centerpiece of tribal community, culture and sustenance and a national ecological treasure,” Governor Newsom said. “With this agreement, we are closer than ever to restoring access to 400 miles of salmon habitat which will be a boon to the local economy. I am grateful for the partnership between

California and Oregon, the Yurok and Karuk Tribes and Berkshire Hathaway that proves when we work together, we can build a better, more inclusive future for all.”

With the Memorandum of Agreement, the parties:

Jointly ask the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to remove PacifiCorp from the license for the project and add California, Oregon and KRRC as co-licensees for carrying out dam removal. Adding the states as co-licensees provides assurances that the project will have sufficient financial backing while honoring settlement terms that stipulate PacifiCorp would not be a co-licensee for removal.

Demonstrate their firm commitment to dam removal.

Agree to nearly double available contingency funds held by KRRC and contractors and, in the unlikely event that additional funds are needed beyond that, Oregon, California and PacifiCorp will share the costs equally to address FERC’s requirement to ensure full funding for the project.

Confirm that the KRRC will remain the dam removal entity for the project.

Plan to navigate the final regulatory approvals necessary to allow the project to begin in 2022 with dam removal in 2023. Site remediation and restoration will continue beyond 2023.

Retain the liability protections for PacifiCorp’s customers established in the KHSa.

Taken together, the provisions are intended to resolve FERC’s concerns raised in a July 2020 order and ensure a successful dam removal project.

“This is an incredibly important step forward on the path towards restorative justice for the people of the Klamath Basin, and towards restoring health to the river as well as everyone and everything that depends on it,” Oregon Governor Kate Brown said. “From time immemorial, the stewardship of the indigenous peoples of the Klamath basin have nurtured the lands, waters, fish and wildlife of this region. In Oregon, the Klamath tribes remember a time when their livelihoods were supported by clean, healthy, and vibrant waters. It is that vision, that promise, that we are working towards restoring for the generations to come.”

“I want to thank Governor Newsom and Governor Brown for their leadership in bringing everyone together to collaborate and solve a very complex challenge,” Berkshire Hathaway Chairman Warren Buffett said. “I recognize the importance of Klamath dam removal and river restoration for tribal people in the Klamath Basin. We appreciate and respect our tribal partners for their collaboration in forging an agreement that delivers an exceptional outcome for the river, as well as future generations. Working together from this historic moment, we can complete the project and remove these dams.”

“As Yurok tribal people, it is our sacred duty to bring balance to the Klamath River,” Yurok Tribe Chair Joseph James said. “At its heart, dam removal is about healing and restoration for the river, for the salmon, and for our people. We have never wavered from this obligation and we are pleased to see dam removal come closer to reality through this agreement. Reaching this important milestone would not be possible without the many tribal people who have dedicated their lives to restoring the river. We want to thank Berkshire Hathaway, PacifiCorp, California, Oregon, and the Karuk Tribe. Although we are excited to be moving forward again, we want to emphasize that the Yurok Tribe will never rest until the dams are out and

the river is healed. From the families on the Klamath we want to thank the Buffett family for their support and leadership.”

“We deeply appreciate the efforts of Governors Newsom and Brown, the Yurok Tribe and the leadership of Berkshire Hathaway to forge a path forward on dam removal,” Karuk Tribe Chair Russell “Buster” Attebery said. “We are more confident than ever that future generations of Karuk will enjoy the benefits of a healthy Klamath River just as their ancestors did dating back to the beginning of time. Most importantly, this moment is a testament to years of devotion and hard work by the community of activists representing all Tribes on the river who have never tired of demanding justice for their communities.”

“We are deeply grateful to the parties who negotiated a path forward for this epic project to restore the Klamath River,” KRRC Chief Executive Officer Mark Bransom said. “As has been the case numerous times in the past, the signatories to the KHSA have tackled obstacles head on and found creative solutions to daunting problems. But we particularly recognize the personal involvement of Governor Newsom, Governor Brown and Berkshire Hathaway leadership who stepped in to ensure that dam removal proceeds. Once all the necessary approvals are obtained it will be full speed ahead in removing the Klamath dams and allowing salmon to access habitat that has been cut off for a century.”