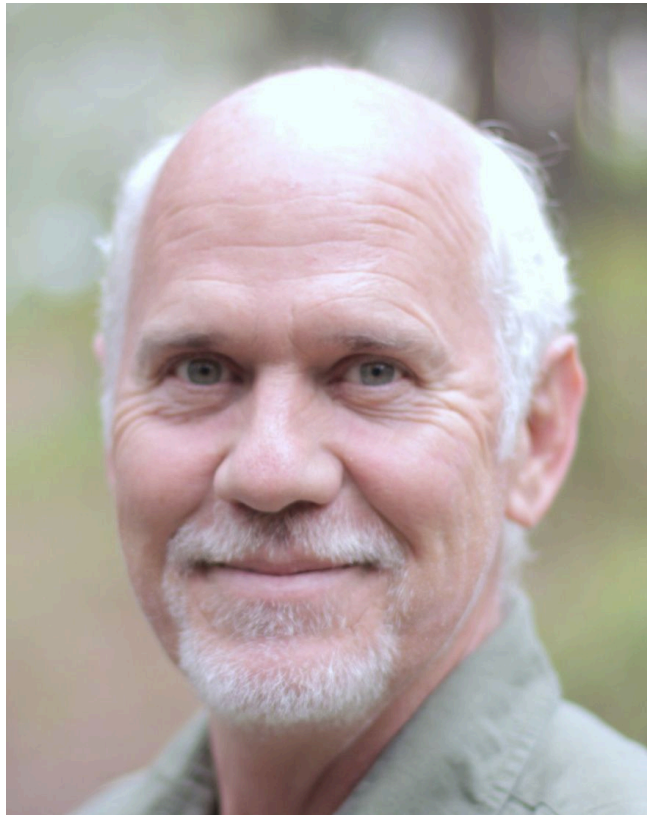

Guest Column: Can I say dam in the paper?

May 28, 2022



At a recent forum for the District 5 County Supervisor race, all the candidates were asked whether they supported removal of the Klamath River dams.

Only Supervisor Masten answered with an unequivocal yes. She noted that the science supports this effort to help restore the river and the salmon which are the primary source of sustenance, economic development, and tourism for the Klamath community.

After first stating that she was on the fence, Terri Colton eventually answered that she would support dam removal because her constituents support it. Yes, they do.

The other three candidates spoke as if they were running for Siskiyou County Supervisor. The reasons they stated for opposing the dam removal seemed uninformed and not representative of local interests. They expressed concerns like, the water is needed for agriculture and cheap energy will be lost.

These statements sound more like the talking points of property owners upriver, rather than the people who live in the Fifth District.

These dams were not built for irrigation but for power generation, so it is understandable that some oppose dam removal because of concern for the loss of electricity. However, the amount of electricity that is generated from these dams is insignificant compared to the energy that comes to us from the massive Columbia River dams.

I'm not even sure why this topic is still being debated. It is virtually a done deal and demolition of the first dam will begin next year. According to the San Francisco Chronicle (May 23, 2022), "The nearly half-billion dollars needed for the joint state, tribal and corporate undertaking has been secured. The demolition plans are drafted. The contractor is in place. Final approval could come by December."

Dam removal is the option chosen by the Pacific Power Corporation which owned the dams. They made a business decision that it is more cost effective to remove the dams than to add the mandated fish ladders. They calculated that they do not need the small amount of electricity that comes from these little old dams.

I suggest that the electricity lost from removing these dams can easily be replaced through the deployment of more local solar energy. Solar power and renewable energy generation is increasing in California. On April 30 this year, California hit a milestone and experienced a peak moment of generating nearly 100 percent of the entire state's power needs from renewable sources.

I attended a Harbor District meeting shortly after this news was announced and took the occasion to congratulate the harbor commissioners for being a part of this success. As you may recall the Harbor District signed a power purchase agreement with a developer that has installed huge solar panels in the harbor.

Harbormaster Tim Petrick has reported that the Harbor is paying approximately 15 percent less by using solar power, as opposed to conventional electricity provided by Pacific Power. They have accrued \$115,000 in year-to-date savings.

If there is enough sun in the harbor to make solar energy work, solar can work anywhere in our county.

There are many families in our county that live off the grid. They can attest to the benefits of renewable energy. Many rely on solar panels, and a few have installed ingenious micro hydro power systems that use small streams and creeks to make free electricity.

This is the kind of self-reliance that would benefit our entire community. We should embrace the potential for local renewable energy generation from solar and wind.

Kevin Hendrick is the Chair, Del Norte County Democratic Central Committee