

Could the dams come down? What if? What if not?



Dean Brockbank, left, vice president and general counsel of PacifiCorp Energy, talks during a meeting with the Herald and News about a recently released dam removal agreement. From left are Toby Freeman of Pacific Power; Greg Addington, executive director of the Klamath Water Users Association; James Honey of Sustainable Northwest and Mike Carrier, natural resources adviser to Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski.

H&N photo by Andrew Mariman

KBRA details made public for first time

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When stakeholders released the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement Wednesday morning, they hit a milestone: for the first time, all the documents related to the broad Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement are available for public inspection.

The hydro agreement details how removal of four Klamath River dams owned by PacifiCorp will proceed, from what happens leading up to removal, how it will be paid for and who's responsible for removal.

Following are the key aspects of the document:

Interim measures

The U.S. Interior secretary is charged with using scientific studies concerning sediment built up behind the dams, water quality and other issues to determine whether dam removal will proceed. The costs of removal also will be evaluated.

The secretary will prepare a dam removal plan establishing a timetable, how to deal with debris and mitigate downstream impacts, complying with applicable laws and how

to reduce cost overruns. A determination must be made by March 31, 2012. If the secretary decides against removal, stakeholders will be notified and given the opportunity to amend the hydro agreement so that dam removal occurs.

Other conditions also must be met before dam removal, including passage of federal legislation implementing the hydro agreement and the KBRA, designation of a dam removal entity and transfer of Keno Dam from PacifiCorp to Interior.

PacifiCorp will continue to receive annual licenses to operate the dams until they are removed, but is to protect the Klamath River and its tributaries during that time.

Transfer and removal

If removal is found to be feasible, PacifiCorp will transfer dam ownership to the federal government. The dam removal entity, which could be a public or private entity, will then begin removing the dams no later than 2020.

Dam removal costs will be capped at \$450 million — \$200 million will come from PacifiCorp's customers, most of them in Oregon, through a surcharge on their energy bills. Another \$250 million could come from California if voters approve the sale of bonds in a future election. No federal dollars will go toward dam removal.

To replace the lost hydro power, PacifiCorp will begin planning out what its customers' energy demands will be and what sources can be obtained.

Liability and mitigation

PacifiCorp will be protected from any liability regarding dam removal but will still be responsible for any impacts to the Klamath River and its tributaries caused by operation of the four dams.

Siskiyou County will receive \$20 million to mitigate the impacts to county revenues from dam removal. The agreement also provides provisions for the city of Yreka's water system, which could be impacted by dam removal.

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