

# There's a big dam difference

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So now that there seems to be [broad agreement to breach four dams](#) on the Klamath River to help restore historic salmon runs, doesn't that suggest that it's also about time to blow up the four Snake River dams, too?

First, in terms of energy production, the Klamath dams are a comparatively puny resource, combining to produce only about 80 megawatts of electricity, a tiny fraction of the 3,000-megawatt capacity of the Snake dams. It's one thing to pledge, as PacifiCorp has done, to develop clean, renewable sources to replace 80 megawatts of forgone hydroelectric power. It's another to shut down 3,000 megawatts at a time when the Northwest is already scrambling to meet growing demand and ambitious new renewable energy standards.

Second and most important, Klamath dams completely block fish passage to hundreds of miles of upstream river habitat, while the Snake dams have effective fish passage that has been improved with tens of millions of dollars in annual investments. PacifiCorp is agreeing to decommission and breach its dams because it would cost the utility's customers about as much to install fish passage as it would to breach the dams and replace their production. That's clearly not the situation on the Snake River.

There may come a time, as the federal government [concedes in its most recent salmon plan](#), when it may be seen as necessary and appropriate to breach the four Snake River dams.

But if that day ever comes, it won't be a result of a dam-breaching precedent on the Klamath.

It will be because every other salmon restoration measure on the Snake River, short of dam breaching, has failed.

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