

Water talks almost done

Meetings are planned in Klamath Falls

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August 1, 2009

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Negotiations on a document that could lead to removal of four Klamath River hydropower dams are forging ahead and could be completed in coming weeks.



Kirk Miller, California Resources Agency deputy secretary, is optimistic that a final agreement on studying dam removal will be done in coming weeks.

Kirk Miller, deputy secretary and general counsel for the California Resources Agency, and Pablo Arroyave, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's assistant regional director, said those involved in the discussions, including PacifiCorp, would meet in Klamath Falls next week.

The final agreement will be based on an agreement in principle announced last November.

“I think the parties at the table will reach a dam removal agreement,” Miller said. “We do anticipate concluding the final agreement shortly.”

Representatives from the 26-plus agencies involved in hammering out a final agreement — including state and federal government agencies, environmental groups, American Indian tribes, water users, fishermen and county governments — have met numerous times over the past few years on the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement. The restoration agreement charts a plan for providing water for various interests. A key condition of that agreement is removal of four Klamath River dams. A preliminary dam removal agreement, which lays out a timeline that could lead to removal of the dams, was jointly announced last November by the governors of Oregon and California, federal Department of the Interior and PacifiCorp, the company that owns the dams.

The group initially set a deadline goal of June 30, but extended the deadline to Aug. 31.

“Just giving everybody time to speak is a time consuming process,” Miller said. “It’s the nature of working with a complex issue with a large number of parties.”

Miller said discussions have included concerns voiced by Siskiyou County supervisors, who have repeatedly voiced opposition to dam removals. “I believe the format we’re negotiating is directly related to the concerns Siskiyou County has made,” Miller said, noting state officials believe scientific studies must be made prior to removing any dams.

Miller said California’s share of funding dams removal likely will be part of a proposed water bond that would fund a range of water issues, including the Klamath River, Sacramento Delta and other areas. The state Legislature would determine when a bond issue goes to the voters.

In Oregon, Gov. Ted Kulongoski signed a bill to allow PacifiCorp to charge ratepayers to pay for dam removal. Estimated cost to residential customers would be about \$1.50 a month.

Side Bars

A framework

A final agreement on a plan to remove four Klamath hydropower dams — Iron Gate, Copco 1, Copco 2 and J.C. Boyle — is not necessarily a commitment to remove the dams.

Instead, it provides a framework for the various interest groups and government agencies to collaborate on environmental and economic studies. The plan, as it stands, would conduct studies until 2012, when the Secretary of the Interior would make a final decision on whether the dams should be removed.

Dam, water agreement are connected

A plan to study the removal of four Klamath River dams will provide momentum in completing the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement, a more comprehensive plan aimed at resolving concerns for government agencies, tribes, water users and fisheries along the Upper and Lower Klamath River basins.

“It goes hand-in-hand with the KBRA. It’s really a package,” said Pablo Arroyave, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation’s assistant regional director in Sacramento. “These

agreements have the potential to change people's lives in a positive way. They're both really critical to solving the Klamath Basin crisis."

"It is true the two agreements work together," said Kirk Miller, California Resources Agency deputy secretary. "We would hope to conclude the KBRA shortly after concluding the dam agreement."

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