



North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

Regional Water Quality Control Board North Coast Region Staff's Summary Report December 12-13, 2023

ITEM: #5

SUBJECT: Update on the Klamath Dam Removal Project (Morton McMillen, Klamath River Renewal Corporation)

BOARD ACTION: This is an informational item; no action will be taken by the Board.

BACKGROUND: The Klamath Dam Removal Project is said to be the largest dam removal project in history. The project will remove four hydroelectric dams built on the Lower Klamath River between 1903 and 1962 that blocked the natural flow of the river and its tributaries, causing water quality impacts and barriers to fish passage that decimated fish populations in the river over several decades.

The initiative to remove the dams on the Lower Klamath River began in 2006 and culminated with the Klamath Hydroelectric Agreement in 2016 between California and Oregon, the Yurok and Karuk Tribes, PacifiCorp, fishing groups and other stakeholders. With approval of the agreement on Nov. 17, 2022, by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which regulates the transmission and sale of electricity and natural gas in interstate commerce, the decision to remove the dams became final, and the Klamath River Renewal Project began.

The schedule for demolition of the four dams is aggressive, with removal of the smallest dam, Copco 2, and restoration of the newly exposed areas within the dam footprint scheduled to be complete by the onset of 2023 winter rains. Indeed, right on schedule, removal of the Copco 2 dam structure was completed in September and its diversion structures in October. With removal of these key dam components and the installation of erosion control features, the river canyon is now ready for consistent river flow for the first time in almost 100 years.

Removal of the remaining three dams, Copco No. 1, Iron Gate, and JC Boyle is scheduled for next year. In January, Klamath River Renewal Corporation (KRRRC) will implement drawdown, the slow draining of the reservoirs, which is expected to take 3-5 months, depending on the amount of water entering the system as a result of spring runoff. Once drawdown is complete, restoration and deconstruction activities will begin

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in earnest. All three dams are expected to be completely removed by November 2024, while restoration activities will continue for years to come to ensure restoration success.

At the Regional Board's December 2020 meeting, staff and invited speakers provided an in-depth information item with an overview of the dam removal project, including site restoration and permitting approach. Materials summarizing that information are linked below under "Supporting Documents."

At the December 2023 meeting, Mort McMillen of the Klamath River Renewal Corporation will provide an update on the project.

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

1. [Klamath River Renewal](http://klamathrenewal.org) (klamathrenewal.org)
2. [December 10, 2020 Information Item Staff Report](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_info/board_meetings/12_2020/pdf/3/Klamath_Dam_Removal_Restoration_Activities_Overview_EOSR_Final.pdf)
(https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/northcoast/board_info/board_meetings/12_2020/pdf/3/Klamath_Dam_Removal_Restoration_Activities_Overview_EOSR_Final.pdf)