



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

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January 25, 2016

State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights
Water Quality Certification Program
Attention: Mr. Parker Thaler
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000

**RE: Scoping Comments on Environmental Impact Report for
Klamath Hydropower Relicensing Project**

Dear Mr. Thaler:

The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors appreciates the opportunity to provide these scoping comments for the Environmental Impact Report for the Klamath Hydropower relicensing project.

This EIR is being prepared to inform the SWRCB's consideration of PacifiCorp's application for certification under Clean Water Act section 401, which is a necessary step for relicensing the Klamath Hydropower Project through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). That process had been held in abeyance for many years while PacifiCorp and other stakeholders, including Humboldt County, worked together to seek legislation to implement the Klamath Basin Regulatory Act and other linked agreements (the Klamath agreements) which would have resulted in the removal of these 4 dams.

Prior to being held in abeyance, FERC issued its final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for relicensing the KHP in November of 2007. The EIS evaluated the probable environmental effects of 6 alternatives, which are outlined in the attached Notice of Preparation for the EIR. The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors had provided comments at the time in support of Alternative 6, which evaluated removal of the four dams (J.C. Boyle, Copco #1, Copco #2, and Iron Gate) which were the subject of the Klamath Agreements.

In preparation of this EIR, the SWRCB must recognize that there was no environmental analysis conducted prior to the dams being installed. Thus, the baseline by which impacts must be measured is not the current existing condition, but the pre-existing condition of the river prior to installation.

Humboldt County is one of several communities that continue to be adversely affected by the current impaired conditions in the Klamath basin. Humboldt County and other coastal counties in

northern California and southern Oregon have historically been dependent upon a healthy Klamath River and its fisheries. Over the past 60 years we have experienced a decline of once-abundant Klamath stock, loss of commercial processing facilities, the progressive decimation of our salmon fishing fleet, emptying of our harbors and suffering among the families in our fishing communities.

Through the FERC process and by its involvement in the Klamath Agreements, Humboldt County has consistently held the position that the only way to adequately address these issues and return the Klamath-Trinity river system to a healthy condition is by removing the four lower dams, which have operated without Clean Water Act certification for over 50 years. The failure of Congress to pass legislation to implement the Klamath Agreements does nothing to change the County's position.

In the reservoirs behind the dams, the cold, swift-running waters of the Klamath are brought to a standstill, allowing the water temperature to warm well above tolerable levels for cold-water salmon. The still, warm waters also serve to concentrate nutrients and to encourage the explosive growth of toxic blue-green algae blooms and other fish pathogens, which are now endemic in the Klamath Basin. These pathogens were implicated in the September 2002 fish kill in which as many as 64,000 Chinook salmon were killed in the lower Klamath. This preventable disaster was the largest fish kill in the history of the Northwest.

The mighty Klamath River has historically been the third-most-productive salmon fishery in the U.S, outside of Alaska, surpassed only by the Columbia River in Oregon and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Rivers in California. The Klamath's location provides an important mid-point linkage between the aforementioned West Coast river systems. This powerful economic engine drove the coastal economies of northern California and southern Oregon, blessing us with abundant salmon that supported our commercial, recreational and tribal fisheries.

Today, however, over 90 percent of the river's salmon habitat has been destroyed or blocked by these aging and obsolete dams. More than 420 miles of historic stream habitat is now completely inaccessible to returning salmon. Over the past 60 years, once-abundant Klamath Chinook salmon have declined sharply, from a historic average of nearly 900,000 to as few as 35,000 or less in some years. Coho salmon are listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and other species - such as green sturgeon and Pacific lamprey - are declining as well.

In the late 1970's, commercial troll ocean fisheries in the Klamath Management Zone landed an average of over 3.6 million pounds of salmon. For the period from 2005 through 2009, that number had plummeted to an average of just 124,000 pounds, representing a decline of 92 percent for the Port of Brookings, and 98 percent for the ports of Eureka and Crescent City (see Table 1).

This precipitous decline has brought the shuttering of commercial processing facilities, the loss of on-shore jobs, an ever-dwindling fishing fleet, and pain and suffering among the families in our fishing communities. Each fishing boat lost represents an independent, family-owned small business that is now gone. Coastal communities in Northern California and Southern Oregon have had to deal with the environmental and economic impact of these dams for many decades, yet these communities did not have the benefit of environmental impact studies, economic analyses, and Senate hearings before their natural wealth, in the form of water, was taken from them.

The impact of the decline in Klamath salmon is felt far beyond the ports of Eureka, Crescent City and Brookings. As previously stated, the Klamath River creates a 'bridge' between salmon populations from the Columbia and Sacramento-San Joaquin River systems. Additionally, Klamath salmon inter-mingle in the ocean with other salmon stocks from as far away as Monterey, CA to central Washington. In this way, declines in Klamath Chinook salmon stocks can affect fisheries across the entire West Coast, triggering ocean salmon season closures over most of the northern California and Oregon coastline and other restrictions as far away as southern Washington.

The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors supports full or partial removal of the four lowermost dams because the resultant reestablishment of basin connectivity and variable stream flows is expected to contribute significantly towards restoration of physical, chemical, and biological processes essential for a functional aquatic ecosystem. Anadromous fish will have access to hundreds of miles of spawning and rearing habitat, and cold-water refugia associated with springs and cold tributaries throughout the basin. Additionally, removal of the dams will restore more natural flow variation and sediment transport.

The lower four dams on the Klamath River (Iron Gate, Copco 1, Copco 2, and JC Boyle) are not a Federal project. Rather, these dams are owned by PacifiCorp, a privately-owned utility company. These low-power hydroelectric dams do not provide any irrigation water, nor do they provide flood control. They are neither large nor particularly powerful, generating a combined annual average of just 78 megawatts (MW) for some 70,000 customers in northern California and southern Oregon, and representing less than two percent of PacifiCorp's electricity portfolio. By comparison, a single, more-modern facility could be expected to generate 1,000 MW or more.

As noted previously, these dams were all built without any provision for fish passage, which would make them illegal by any modern standards. The license to operate these dams expired in 2006 and, as a part of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC's) relicensing process, PacifiCorp would be required to retrofit all four dams with fish passage and make other upgrades, at a cost of at least \$350 million. Fish passage would also further limit the dams' energy production capacity, as it would reduce the amount of water available for energy generation. The cost of full dam removal has been estimated at \$291 million, making it a far-better proposition for PacifiCorp's ratepayers.

The Klamath Facilities Removal Final EIS/EIR describes the socioeconomic effects of the analyzed alternatives, including potential changes to economic output, labor income, and employment as well as fiscal effects on local governments (Section 3.15). The EIS/EIR correctly states that the local economy of Humboldt County, among others, is linked to the Klamath River through fishing, recreation, and tourism. According to that EIS/EIR, dam removal would have beneficial economic effects on commercial ocean fishing, recreational ocean and in-river fishing, and tribal harvest. For commercial ocean fishing of Chinook salmon, dam removal will cause an increase of \$13.4 million (2012 dollars) per year of economic output for the coastal region from central California to northern Oregon and generate a total of 453 new jobs. Residents and businesses in 12 coastal counties (Del Norte, Humboldt, Mendocino, Sonoma, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Cruz, and Monterey Counties in California; Lane, Douglass, and Coos Counties in Oregon) will benefit from

improved commercial and sport fishing opportunities and reduced risk of fishery closures and economic disruption.

Our Board wishes to underscore that dam removal will provide a significant boost for sustainable jobs and economic productivity for Humboldt County and other coastal counties. We ask that the Klamath Facilities Removal Final EIS/EIR be incorporated into the record for your EIR, though we note that analysis likely underestimates this economic benefit. For a more comprehensive analysis of the direct and indirect economic benefits that would result from dam removal, we highlight the following studies:

- Peterson, John et al. December 31, 2010. North Coast Pre-MLPA Community-Based Socioeconomic Characterization and Risk Assessment. Technical report prepared by Impact Assessment, Inc. for the County of Humboldt Headwaters Fund.
- Hackett, Steven, and Hansen, Doreen. October 3, 2008. Cost and Revenue Characteristics of the Salmon Fisheries in California and Oregon. Technical report prepared for the National Marine Fisheries Service.
- Gallo, David. October 8, 2010. Economic Impact of the Klamath Settlement Agreements with a Focus on the Impact of Restoration and Construction Activity on the Economies of Del Norte, Humboldt, Klamath, and Siskiyou Counties. Technical report prepared for PROSPER and Trout Unlimited.

Humboldt County and other coastal communities have lived with the environmental, economic, and social impacts of the Klamath dams and excessive water diversions for decades. Dams and excess diversions have taken the natural wealth of the river and redistributed those benefits disproportionately to the upper basin. Removal of the Klamath Hydropower Project will help restore equity and fairness in the distribution of economic and social benefits for communities that depend on the Klamath River.

The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors remains committed to supporting full removal of the Klamath Hydropower Project as the only viable way to return the Klamath River to a healthy condition.

Please contact Hank Seemann at (707) 445-7741 for questions or to request additional information.

Sincerely,



Mark Lovelace, Chairman
Humboldt County Board of Supervisors