



KLAMATH BASIN RESTORATION AGREEMENT EXTENDED TO GAIN TIME FOR CONGRESSIONAL SUPPORT

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The 42 parties that originally signed the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement early this week approved a first amendment to the settlement that, among other things, extends by two years the time allowed to gain congressional authorization, and funding to implement restoration actions.

The overall plan includes the removal of four hydro electric projects to help foster the revival of imperiled fish species such as salmon.

The restoration agreement was scheduled to expire Dec. 31 if federal legislation had not been completed to authorize and fund key elements of the agreements including fish restoration projects, measures to achieve the agreed water balance in the agreements, and programs to help communities in the basin.

“As originally drafted, the KBRA would have terminated on December 31, 2012 unless Congress passed authorizing legislation,” according to the Klamathrestoration.org web site. “Because it was increasingly clear that Congress would not act before the KBRA’s self-imposed deadline, the Parties agreed to a KBRA amendment that would extend the agreement until December 31, 2014.”

For decades Klamath basin communities have battled over the region’s most precious commodity: water. Massive fish kills, irrigation shut offs, and fishery closures have created economic insecurity for tribes, farmers, and rural communities throughout the Klamath Basin and for small fishing communities all along the California and Oregon coasts, according to a press release issued this week by the Karuk Tribe.

The agreements aims to resolve those issues.

The Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement and the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement were forged to help solve those problems and boost populations of salmon and other fish species. The agreement included participation of Klamath Basin stakeholder groups including the Klamath River basin tribes, irrigators, fishermen, conservation groups, dam owner PacifiCorp, the governors of California and Oregon, the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and the director of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. The agreements were signed in February 2010.

Also participating were agencies within the states, the Department of the Interior, the National Marine Fisheries Service, Humboldt County, Calif., and Klamath County, Ore. The river flows out of southwest Oregon into northern California and empties into the Pacific Ocean.

The restoration agreement is intended to result in effective and durable solutions which will: 1) restore and sustain natural fish production and provide for full participation in ocean and river harvest opportunities of fish species throughout the Klamath Basin; 2) establish reliable water and power supplies which sustain agricultural uses, communities, and National Wildlife

Refuges; and 3) contribute to the public welfare and the sustainability of all Klamath Basin communities.

The hydroelectric settlement lays out the process for additional studies, environmental review, and a decision by the Secretary of the Interior regarding whether removal of four dams owned by PacifiCorp: 1) will advance restoration of the salmonid fisheries of the Klamath Basin; and 2) is in the public interest, which includes but is not limited to consideration of potential impacts on affected local communities and tribes.

The Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement does not have a termination date and the changes do not affect the proposed dam removal date of 2020.

The four dams are Iron Gate, J.C. Boyle, Copco 1 and Copco 2 dams on the Klamath River. The Hydroelectric Settlement includes provisions for the interim operation of the dams and the process to transfer, decommission, and remove the dams.

These dams block coho salmon, chinook salmon, steelhead, and Pacific lamprey from migrating above Iron Gate Dam in northern California. Removal of these dams would give salmon access to an additional 300 miles of habitat in the Klamath River basin.

The agreements need congressional authorization for full implementation. They would provide greater water certainty to irrigators who have seen diversions shut off in the middle of growing seasons, but cap those diversions in a manner that provides greater flow assurances for fish, the tribal press release says.

Under the agreements water storage would be increased in Oregon's Upper Klamath Lake and the four dams further downstream would be removed. Dam removal would improve conditions for salmon and save power customers money because, under terms of the agreements, dam removal is cheaper than mandatory infrastructure upgrades required by a new dam license, the tribal press release says.

"We now need leadership from Sen. Wyden and Sen. Feinstein to move this through Congress or else the Klamath will soon plunge back into a constant state of crisis and economic uncertainty," said Leaf Hillman, Natural Resources director for the Karuk Tribe. "This Agreement is the only approach that can restore salmon runs while benefitting Klamath Basin agriculture."

The Klamath Basin Coordinating Council noted that when these agreements are implemented, local irrigators and fisheries would have greater certainty for obtaining the water needed in dry years.

The amendment approved Monday extend time for Congress to act on the Klamath basin agreements. It also addresses tribal funding issues, adds the Klamath Basin Power Alliance as a new party, and cleans up other provisions of the document.

A summary of the changes and a copy of the amendments with signatures are available at www.klamathcouncil.org.

