

HABITAT COMMITTEE REPORT

Klamath River FERC Relicensing Process

At the March 2006 Council meeting, the Habitat Committee (HC) was asked to redraft a comment letter to Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relating to relicensing the Klamath River hydroelectric project. The HC worked between March and April meetings to complete a second draft of that letter. Subsequent to completing the second draft, NMFS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) issued preliminary prescriptions and recommendations to FERC relating to the project. Wishing to cite NMFS' recommendations into the Council letter, and in order to respond to informal comments from Council members and others, the HC is providing a revised draft of the letter for Council consideration (Agenda Item C.1.a, Supplemental Attachment 1, April 2006); the edits are intended to clarify and provide proper literature citations, and do not make substantive changes to the recommendations in the previous draft.

The HC letter recommends decommissioning of the lower four Klamath River Dams and improvements to fish passage at the remaining system dams, and cites the NMFS report as additional justification for such action. NMFS notes (2006:A-6) that "the dam removal alternative is a superior alternative from a fish passage water quality and habitat restoration standpoint."

A map on page A-19 of the NMFS document shows the project area and dams. Removal of the lower four dams provides access to approximately 59 miles of anadromous fish habitat within the project area. Fish passage improvements to remaining dams provide an additional gain of approximately 360 miles of suitable habitat upstream of Keno dam.

The Council faces difficult decisions for 2006 in the aftermath of several years of constraints related to depressed Klamath salmon stocks. It is time to call for restoration of anadromous fish habitat in the Klamath River; this letter to FERC is the right step.

Removing the dams is just one step in the process to restore fish productivity in the Klamath; remaining are issues with water withdrawals and flows in upper Klamath. Restoring a natural hydrograph will require further action related to irrigation and flow management in the upper basin. Note that the Trinity River is being managed according to a Trinity Record of Decision, which is separate from the FERC process.

Background on Klamath Hydroelectric Project

When the **Copco 1 dam** was built in 1918, it permanently blocked access to more than 300 miles of salmon and steelhead habitat in the mainstem upper Klamath River and its tributaries. **Copco 2**, one-quarter mile downriver from Copco 1, also blocks migration. Together, these two dams significantly alter river flows within each 24-hour period. **Iron Gate Dam**, constructed in 1962 to re-regulate the varying flows caused by the Copco 1 and 2 dams, further blocked seven miles of spawning habitat and access to important tributaries. The **J.C. Boyle dam** diverts a large portion of the Klamath River for power generation along a four-mile stretch. This dam's

operation is predicated on energy demand under a process called power peaking and load following; as a result, downstream river flows and flow fluctuations are not adequately managed with regard to aquatic habitat.

In addition to hydroelectric impacts, water management in the Klamath basin has dramatically altered natural flow fluctuations, suppressing the high springtime flows that aid the outmigration of young salmon. This is a continuing issue for Bureau of Reclamation and state water resource department attention.

PFMC
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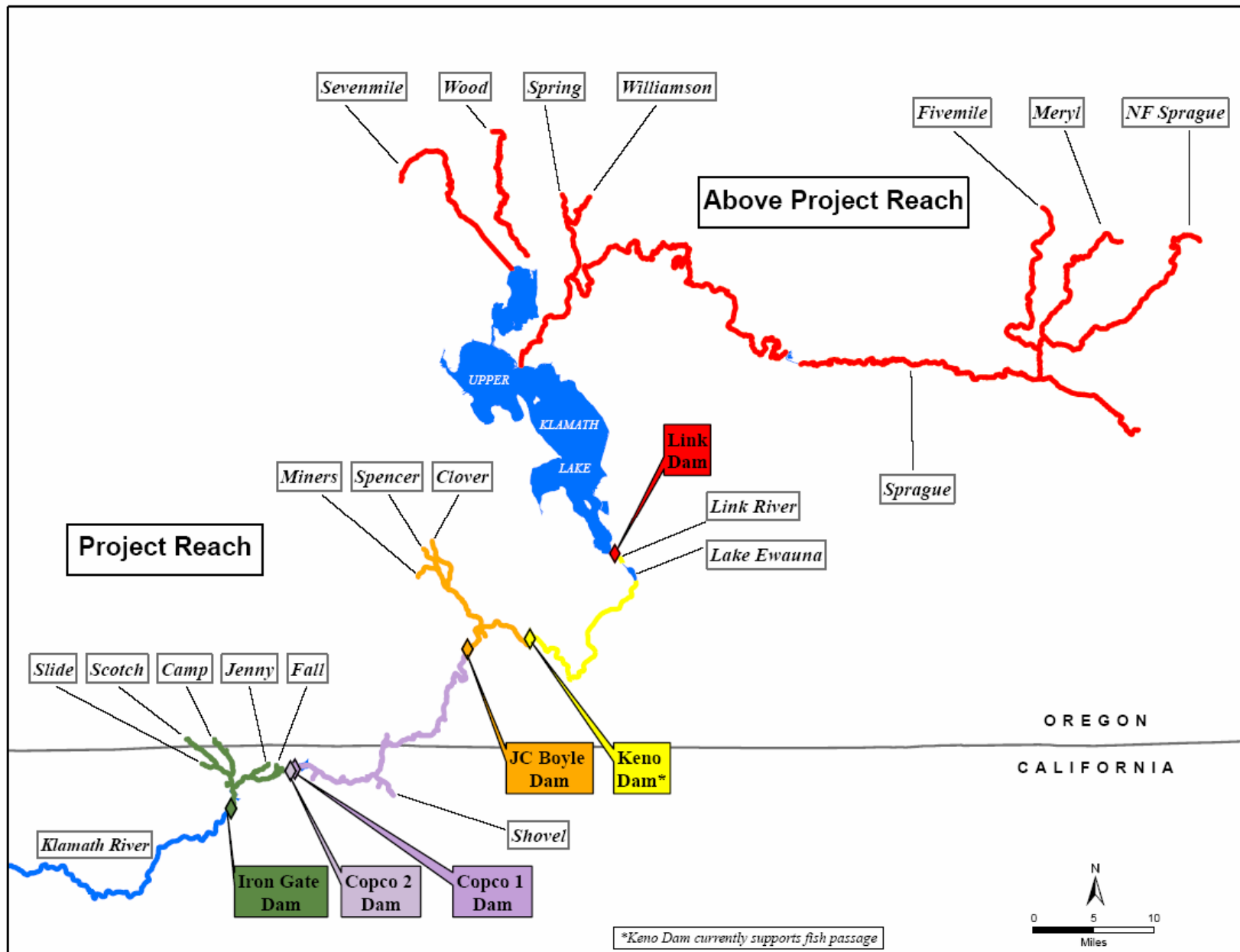


Figure 1. Project Reach and Above Project Reach (in red) designations for the Klamath River above Iron Gate Dam).