



## Pacific Fishery Management Council

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Herbert A. Pollard II, Chair | Charles A. Tracy, Executive Director

May X, 2017

The Honorable Kimberly D. Bose  
Secretary, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
888 First Street, N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20426

Dear Madam Secretary:

The Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) is submitting this letter in support of the September 2016 application filed by the Klamath River Renewal Corporation (KRRC) and PacifiCorp to transfer PacifiCorp's license to operate the four Klamath Hydroelectric Facilities dams in Oregon and California to the KRRC, and more importantly, in support of an additional application filed by the KRRC requesting the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to approve dam decommissioning and removal of the facilities from the Klamath River. Removal of the Klamath River dams would be a major step toward restoring essential fish habitat (EFH) for Klamath River fall Chinook salmon, the stock whose depleted status has resulted in the closing of substantial ocean and Klamath River fisheries during 2017.

The Council recommends management actions for Federal fisheries off of Washington, Oregon, and California. It is one of eight Regional Fishery Management Councils established by the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA), which includes provisions to identify, conserve, and enhance EFH for fisheries managed under a Council's fishery management plan. Each Council is authorized under the MSA to comment on any Federal or state activity that may affect the habitat, including EFH, of a fishery resource under its authority. The MSA defines EFH as "those waters and substrate necessary to fish for spawning, breeding, feeding, or growth to maturity."

The projection for Klamath River fall Chinook potential natural spawner abundance in 2017 is lower than all postseason values estimated from 1985-2016. The age-three ocean abundance forecast is the second lowest on record, while the age-four forecast is the lowest on record—less than half the previous lowest forecast. Due to the extremely low projection for Klamath fall Chinook in 2017, fisheries off the coast of California and Oregon have large closed areas, and those remaining open are at *de minimis* levels. Inriver sport fisheries for fall Chinook salmon in the Klamath River are closed during 2017, and tribal fisheries will be nearly non-existent, resulting in allocations that are far from meeting subsistence needs and providing for no economic opportunity. These closures will have severe economic and social consequences along the coasts of Oregon, California, and in the Klamath Basin. It is noteworthy that there have been several previous years when concerns regarding the status of Klamath fall Chinook salmon have resulted

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in severe curtailment of fisheries and disaster declarations along the coast of Oregon, California, and within the Klamath River Basin.

Multiple factors contributed to the decline of Klamath fall Chinook in 2017, such as high juvenile disease levels and poor ocean productivity. However, the Klamath dams are thought to be a primary contributing factor to the high juvenile disease levels in the Klamath. The dams create habitat conditions conducive to the proliferation of the parasitic disease *Ceratanova shasta*; a disease that was at extreme infection levels for the juveniles of the age-three and age-four broods that are driving the low projection for 2017.

The Council has followed with keen interest the Klamath Hydroelectric Project relicensing process, as well as the negotiations and eventual agreements that were reached to remove the lower four dams on the Klamath River, given the negative effect these dams have upon EFH and the associated abundance of salmon stocks in the Klamath River. The Council is on record from previously submitted comments (attached) to FERC regarding the effects the Klamath dams have upon EFH, the salmon fisheries we manage, and our desire to see the four dams removed to help address habitat and water quality problems of the Klamath River and restore access to several hundred miles of historic anadromous fish habitat.

We are encouraged to see that the Amended Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement is the impetus to puts us on a trajectory for dam removal in 2020. The agreement appears to have broad support, given that: 1) it is a business decision by PacifiCorp, the owner of the dams, 2) is in the rate-payers' interest, 3) it contributes to the restoration of salmon of the Klamath River, thereby benefiting salmon fisheries along the West Coast, and 4) has sufficient non-federal funding for implementation. Therefore, we strongly recommend that FERC approve the application to transfer ownership of the Klamath Hydroelectric Project to the KRRC, as well as the application from the KRRC to decommission and remove the dams from the Klamath River.

Sincerely,

Charles A. Tracy  
Executive Director

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