

# **BRING THE SALMON HOME**

## ***Background information for the Klamath River DAM REMOVAL Campaign***

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### **Introduction**

Fed by snowmelt from the Cascade Mountains, the Klamath River begins as a series of wetlands, marshes, and lakes in the high mountain desert of Southeastern Oregon. Often called the “Everglades of the West”, this area once hosted an incredible diversity of wildlife, from the millions of migratory fowl that winter in the marshes to unique species of fish that inhabit the lakes and river. With up to 1.1 million adult fish being produced annually, including chinook, coho, pinks and chum salmon as well as abundant steelhead, the Klamath was once the third most productive salmon river system on the west coast.

For thousands of years, Native People including the Klamath, Karuk, Hoopa and Yurok Tribes sustained themselves on the bounty of the river. As white settlers came to the area, a sustainable commercial fishery developed.

Today all of this has changed. The current Klamath River fall chinook salmon productivity is now less than 8 percent of its historical abundance. For coho salmon, once the workhorse of the west coast fishing industry, the numbers are less than 1 percent. Chum and pink salmon, once abundant in the Klamath, are long gone and totally extinct. Coho salmon are listed as a threatened species, the Lost River Sucker, and the Short Nosed Sucker are listed as Endangered Species. Today, the Karuk no longer hold a First Salmon Ceremony for there are virtually no spring run salmon to harvest.

Many factors can be blamed for the Klamath’s decline, but none are more outstanding or timely to address than the dams which stand between salmon and their home spawning grounds in the Upper Basin.

### **Dams**

When the Copco 1 Dam was constructed on the Klamath River in 1918, it permanently blocked access to more than 300 miles of salmon and steelhead habitat in the main stem of the upper Klamath and its tributaries. Another dam, Copco 2, was constructed just a quarter-mile downstream of the original facility in 1925.

These dams not only blocked salmon and steel-head migration, they significantly altered river flows, causing releases that could drop by 1,500 percent or more in a matter of minutes. Such radically altered flows severely damaged one of the most important salmon spawning areas on the Klamath for spring-run chinook and steelhead, stranding adult and young fish alike, exposing egg nests, cementing spawning gravels, and preventing upstream recruitment of new spawning gravels.

The aptly named 173-foot-high Iron Gate Dam was constructed in 1962 to re-regulate the wildly varying flows from the upstream Copco dams and run a 20 megawatt power plant. With the construction of Iron Gate, another seven miles of spawning habitat in the mainstem as well as access to important tributaries such as Camp Creek was blocked.

Today, all anadromous runs of salmon and steelhead, once abundant in the upper basin, are now extinct above Iron Gate Dam. This means over 350 miles of historic salmon habitat is unreachable by fish and much of it buried beneath reservoirs.

In all, there are six dams on the mainstem of the Klamath River: Iron Gate, Copco I and Copco II, J.C. Boyle, Keno, and Link River. Since Keno and Link effectively replace natural reefs that were destroyed and serve the need of re-regulating erratic flows for the upstream irrigation project, river advocates seek the removal of the lower four dams. However, Keno and Link must be fitted with functional ladders.

### **The Impact on Klamath Basin Tribes**

Discounted by the Bureau of Reclamation, and until recent court orders rarely part of its planning, were the water and fishing rights of the Basin's Native Peoples. Originally the Upper Klamath Lake supported a Tribal subsistence fishery of more than 50 tons per year as well as a booming recreational fishery and at least one cannery.

The Klamath Tribes, located above all six dams in Chiloquin, Oregon area have been denied access to salmon and steelhead for over 80 years.

For down river tribes, the dams have contributed to the near extirpation of spring-run salmon, and a dramatic decline for salmon and steelhead overall. This robs the Karuk, Hoopa, and Yurok Tribes of an important economic resource, but more importantly, it robs the tribes' of a vital cultural resource and subsistence fishery.

In 2004, the Karuk harvested less than 100 salmon from their last remaining dip net site, Ishi Pishi falls.

### **The Disaster of 2002**

In the fall of 2002, the cumulative impacts of dams, diversions, and poor management led to the Klamath's worst single disaster when over 68,000 fish died in a matter of days. This represents the largest fish kill in US history. The fish kill was caused by warm water and low flows, a situation created by a combination of poor water management from the Upper Klamath Irrigation Project and water quality degradation by the dams.

### **Opportunities Afforded by Hydrorelicensing**

In February, PacifiCorp filed a license application for the operation of Iron Gate, Copco 1, Copco 2, J.C. Boyle, and Keno dams. The current license expires in 2006. Despite years of meetings with Tribes, environmentalists, and fishermen, PacifiCorp ignored all calls for fish passage in their final license application..

When the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) issues a new license in 2006, it will last for 50 years. Thus relicensing provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to address restoration via dam removal.

Federal agencies such as Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service have the authority to demand adequate measures for fish restoration. Likewise, the state Water Resources Control Board has mandatory conditioning authority. This means the state of California can demand protection of the Klamath's "beneficial uses" in the license. This includes water quality, recreation, and fish habitat. Therefore Gov. Schwarzenegger has the power to

require a feasible strategy to return salmon to the upper Klamath Basin. The state's demands could include a combination of functional ladders and dam removal to achieve these goals.

### **Myths told by dam supporters:**

**Myth:** The dams improve water quality

**Fact:** Dams degrade water quality by allow otherwise cold water to warm as it sits behind the dam, stagnant beneath the sun. The Klamath water is unusually loaded with nutrients from fertilizers used upstream. This allows water in the reservoirs to host massive algal blooms that create a host water quality problems downstream

**Myth:** We are desperate for the electricity the Klamath dams produce

**Fact:** The Klamath dams produce a relatively small amount of energy, 147 megawatts. According to the California Energy Commission's 2002 *California Hydroelectricity Outlook Report*: "Because of the small capacity of the Klamath hydro units...removal of these units will not have a significant reliability impact on a larger regional scale."

**Myth:** These dams are needed by agriculture

**Fact:** None of the dams targeted for removal are used to create irrigation diversions

**Myth:** The dams are needed for flood control

**Fact:** The dams were not designed for or effectively used for flood control.

### **Who is PacifiCorp?**

As it turns out, PacifiCorp is a wholly owned subsidiary of the international energy giant, Scottish Power (*NYSE - SPI*). Scottish Power is the 28<sup>th</sup> largest energy company in the world, with a market worth over \$14.9 billion. Three of PacifiCorp's top 10 institutional shareholders are located in San Francisco: Dodge and Cox, Duff & Phelps Investment Management Co., and UBS Realty Investors LLC.

### **What you can do to help:**

- Write or call your elected officials on the local, state and federal levels. Let them know that you want to see the Klamath salmon return home.
  - ***It is important ecologically.*** The Klamath is one of the most diverse regions of the west and offers one of the best opportunities for restoration in the state. The Klamath once hosted 1.1 million fish each year but today hosts 100,000 in a good year.
  - ***It is important economically.*** The bounty of the Klamath could be worth \$4.5 billion to the national economy through fishing and canneries. With construction of the Klamath dams, the economic base for CA north coast communities was slowly destroyed. Dam removal coupled to other restoration strategies could rebuild it.
  - ***It is the moral thing to do.*** Klamath Basin tribes are suffering from the loss of fish. The Karuk, Hoopa, Yurok, Klamath Tribes and others lived along

the river for thousands of years and developed cultural practices based on the fishery. Loss of the fishery intimately affects the Tribes' culture and robs them of an economic base for modern Tribal economies.

- Keep pace with the latest news and action alerts which can be found at: [www.karuk.us](http://www.karuk.us). Just click on our campaign link.
- Join a conservation organization such as Friends of the River that is working with the Tribes to Bring the Salmon Home.

Send your letter to:

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger  
State Capitol Building  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Phone: 916-445-2841  
Fax: 916-445-4633  
[governor@governor.ca.gov](mailto:governor@governor.ca.gov)

Also Scottish Power is the Corporation that owns the dams.

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