

PRESS RELEASE

Klamath River Renewal Corporation

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***WORLD'S LARGEST SALMON RESTORATION PROJECT UNDERWAY
Officials share strategy and timelines for Klamath dam removal, river restoration***

The Press Briefing is **Thursday, March 23, 2023**, at 10 am via zoom, details in editor's notes.

Yreka, CA – Work has officially begun on removing the four dams that comprise the Lower Klamath Hydropower Project. “Crews are already in the field doing the preliminary work for dam removal,” explained Klamath River Renewal Corporation (KRRC) Chief Executive Officer Mark Bransom. “This work includes bridge upgrades, new road construction to access the dam sites more easily, worksite development, and more.”

The plan to remove the lower four Klamath River dams and restore the 38-mile river reach to a natural free flowing condition stems from an [agreement](#) between previous dam owner PacifiCorp, the states of California and Oregon, the Karuk Tribe, the Yurok Tribe, and a host of conservation and fishing organizations. The plan was formally [approved](#) by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission late last year.

“These dams provide no irrigation for agriculture, are not operated for flood control, and generate very little power,” explained KRRC Board president Brian Johnson. “But they do play a huge role in the decline of Pacific salmon. This project aims to fix that.”

The project is funded by \$200 million from PacifiCorp and \$250 million from a California Water Bond passed in 2014.

“We have several milestones associated with the project to highlight this year,” noted Bransom, “this includes the replacement of a drinking water line for the city of Yreka in May and the removal of Copco 2 Dam by September.”

The three larger dams are to be removed next year with removal of all four dams completed by the end of 2024; however, the restoration of the 38 mile reach of river impacted by the dams will take longer. That restoration process is already underway as well.

“We wanted to get a running start on this project,” explains Dave Coffman, the Northern California and Southern Oregon Director of Resource Environmental Solutions (RES). “Our crews spent several years collecting thousands of native seeds from plants around the reservoir sites that we propagated at commercial nurseries to become 17 billion seeds and thousands of saplings. As soon as the reservoirs are drawn down, we will immediately start the restoration process by seeding these areas.” This particular project is one of several highlighted in the film [Restoring Balance](#).

RES will be reconnecting critical tributaries and ensuring fish can once again access over 400 miles of historical habitat upstream of the dams. Added Coffman, “we are excited to help bring this reach of the river back to life. RES will be here as long as it takes to make this project successful.”

Local tribes have led the effort to remove the dams for over 20 years and are particularly excited to see the project begin. “Dam removal is the first giant leap towards a restored Klamath River,” noted Wendy Ferris, KRRC Board member appointed by the Karuk Tribe. “We look forward to welcoming the salmon back home to areas they haven’t visited in more than a century.”

Similar sentiments were shared by Karuk Tribal Chairman Russell ‘Buster’ Attebery. “Many people told us this day would never come. Well, it’s here now and the salmon are coming home. I can tell you this is just the beginning - there’s a lot more restoration coming to the Klamath Basin.”

“We want to thank everyone who helped make this dream a reality,” noted Yurok Vice-Chairman Frankie Joe Myers. “It just goes to show what we can accomplish when the Tribes and our allies in the conservation movement join forces in common cause.”

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Editor’s notes:

- **Zoom link:**
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87235331185?pwd=djBIZWdKN0Y2N3pxR0J6UW1NeTEydz09>
 - Meeting ID: 872 3533 1185
 - Passcode: 726728
- [Restoring Balance](#), new film describing dam removal and restoration project.
- [Infographic](#) of dam removal schedule