



State of California - Natural Resources Agency
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE
Northern Region
601 Locust Street
Redding, CA 96001
<http://www.wildlife.ca.gov>

GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor
CHARLTON H. BONHAM Director



March 1, 2024

Michael Kobseff
Chairman
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

1312 Fairlane Road
Yreka, CA 96097

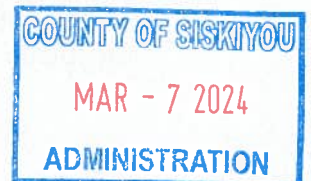
SUBJECT: CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE RESPONSE LETTER TO SISKIYOU BOARD OF SUPERVISORS REQUEST – ASSURANCES FOR FISHERIES ALONG KLAMATH RIVER

Dear Chairman Kobseff:

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (Department) appreciates the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors (County) request for assurances for water users and the continued engagement with the Department, especially with respect to the Lower Klamath Dam Removal Project (Project). The Department is aware the Project will result in short-term impacts on anadromous species as analyzed and described in the Project's environmental documents, permits, and regulatory authorizations. Sediment evacuation is expected to be the most severe short-term impact with the magnitude and duration primarily influenced by water year type. Measures are built into the Project to minimize this short-term impact including:

- Timing of drawdown to occur during the least sensitive biological period after escapement of Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and Coho Salmon (*O. kisutch*) into tributaries such as the Shasta and Scott Rivers,
- Tightening up of the dam removal schedule to a 20-month period,
- Incorporating measures to capture and relocate juvenile Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, and steelhead trout (*O. mykiss*) from the mainstem Klamath River prior to drawdown, and
- A sub-plan under the Aquatic Resources Management Plan to capture and relocate juvenile Chinook Salmon, Coho Salmon, and steelhead trout from tributary confluences during the outmigration period of the drawdown year if mainstem Klamath River suspended sediment

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concentrations exceed 1,000 milligrams per liter, and/or if tributary water temperatures exceed a 7-day average of the daily maximum values of 19 degrees Celsius, or if low dissolved oxygen levels or unusual fish behavior indicate that relocation may be warranted. Several potential relocation sites have been identified which are associated with the mainstem Klamath River further downriver, cold-water tributaries, and off-channel ponds.

Once volitional fish passage is achieved, reintroduction of anadromous fishes upstream of the former Iron Gate Dam can begin. The repopulation of historical habitats upstream of Iron Gate Dam is expected to take multiple generations as founders spawn and their progeny return to spawn, ultimately leading to long-term fisheries benefits.

The Department will continue monitoring adult salmonid escapement and juvenile salmonid outmigration on the Scott and Shasta Rivers, and Bogus Creek, annually. As of February 2024, preliminary population estimates for juvenile Chinook Salmon generated for the Shasta River show a high number of juveniles in the river as a result of the warm and wet winter. While the mainstem Klamath River has experienced the expected decrease in water quality conditions over the past several weeks, as a result of the Project, turbidity is improving, and temperature and dissolved oxygen continue to be good since the initial drawdown action. Water quality conditions in the Shasta River continue to remain good and are expected to remain so into the spring. The Department along with other Klamath Basin Fisheries Managers will continue to closely monitor river conditions and juvenile numbers through the outmigration season and will implement rescue and relocation efforts if warranted.

Following removal of the dams, the Department and other Basin Fisheries Managers will be monitoring the reintroduction of anadromous salmonids as they repopulate historical habitats upstream of Iron Gate Dam. The Department has prepared the "Klamath River Anadromous Fishery Reintroduction and Restoration Monitoring Plan for the California Natural Resources Agency and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife" which the Department intends to implement in the fall of 2024, once volitional passage is achieved. This important monitoring along with continuation of downriver monitoring will enable us to track changes in salmonid populations pre- and post-dam removals in order to help inform fisheries management and future habitat restoration in the Klamath Basin.


The Department understands that the County would like assurances or protections through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that any fluctuations in the salmonid population within the Klamath River and its

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tributaries not be attributed to water users in Siskiyou County. Salmonid populations are dynamic and fluctuate in response to many factors including, but not limited to, individual tributary conditions, water use and diversion operation, climate change, and ocean conditions. In the Klamath River watershed, many tributaries have been altered by anthropogenic activities and use. It once supported large numbers of fish but now only supports small fractions of those numbers. This is evident in long-term fisheries monitoring data. As a trustee agency for California's fish, wildlife, and plant resources, and the habitats upon which they depend, as well as the several factors that could affect salmonid populations, the Department simply lacks the ability to provide any such assurances or protections related to changes in salmonid populations. However, the Department recognizes the County's concern and the Project's potential short term impacts to Klamath salmonid populations. The Department will continue to coordinate and work in good faith with the County, public, and water users. The Department's recent allocation of 20 million dollars in grant funding for the Scott and Shasta watersheds, as well as additional grant funding for watersheds in Siskiyou County, demonstrates the Department's commitment to working collaboratively with the County and water users to improve these watersheds and their communities.

The Department looks forward to continued coordination and dialogue with the County as we navigate this changing landscape. Should you have any questions regarding the Department's comments, please direct inquiries to Michael Harris at KlamathWatershed@wildlife.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:

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Tina Bartlett, Regional Manager
Northern Region

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ec: Crystal Robinson, Kurt Bainbridge
California Department of Fish and Wildlife