

Klamath Settlement Group

The Best Hope for Solving the Klamath River Crisis

Since 2005 a diverse group of 26 stakeholders, referred to as the Klamath Settlement Group, have been engaged in the difficult task of developing a consensus-based solution for long standing disputes in the Klamath Basin. We want to report on the progress we are making.

The Klamath River Basin straddles 16,400 square miles of south-central Oregon (Upper Basin) comprised of agricultural, forest and refuge lands, northern-central California (Mid Basin) agricultural and forest lands, and north-west California's steep, mountainous forested lands. The Klamath River flows 254 miles from its Oregon headwaters into the Pacific Ocean. The Klamath region is renowned for its salmon fisheries production in the Pacific Northwest—the third largest in the Pacific Northwest.

The Upper Basin's Klamath Project and private systems supplies supply irrigation water for a wide variety of crops and six national wildlife refuges operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The Klamath Basin has been a poster child for water conflicts for decades, too often pitting conservationists, tribes, farmers, fishermen, counties, and state and federal agencies against each other. Given this history, we believe that the formation of the Klamath Settlement Group represents significant progress. Our goal is to bring all of these interests together to find agreement on lasting solutions to the Basin's social, economic, and conservation needs.

While the particulars and discussions are confidential, representatives from Klamath Basin Tribes, state and federal agencies, counties, fishermen's groups, agricultural and conservation organizations are, in good faith, meeting in a 'Settlement Process'. This group has evaluated ideas and proposals that restore the fisheries, meet the economic needs of irrigators, tribes, and local governments, and protect water quality and agriculture.

The group has completed the difficult work of forging a framework based on principles outlining how we can address habitat needs for fish, balance river flows throughout the basin to meet economic and environmental needs, and ensure the economic stability of the entire Basin's rural communities; we are now working to craft these principles into a Settlement Agreement.

These settlement negotiations unfold as the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) simultaneously but separately weigh PacifiCorp's application for a new 30 to 50 year license to operate its hydropower dams on the Klamath River.

While many details remain to be fully negotiated in a final settlement, we believe these key principles will form a strong foundation for those discussions. The Settlement Group is addressing:

- The future of the lower four Klamath River dams;

- Water for agriculture, fish and wildlife;
- Programs to rebuild salmon, steelhead and lamprey populations;
- Furthering partnerships between agricultural and wildlife values;
- Power costs for irrigation and National Wildlife Refuge pumping needs;
- Tribal participation in fisheries efforts and economic development; and
- Mitigation for counties that may be affected by the settlement.

The Klamath Settlement Group believes that the best hope for the Klamath River is to forge a comprehensive solution that provides for long-term sustainability and vitality of the place we call home. We remain committed to working together to solve this long-simmering crisis and look forward to announcing our agreement later this year.

Signed

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service

U.S. Department of Commerce, National Marine Fisheries Service

U.S. Department of the Interior, including Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, and Fish and Wildlife Service

California Department of Fish and Game, California Resources Agency.

State of Oregon, including Oregon Governor's Natural Resources Office, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Water Resources Department

Hoopa Valley Tribe

Karuk Tribe

Klamath Tribe

Yurok Tribe

Humboldt County, California

Siskiyou County, California

Klamath County, Oregon

Klamath Off-Project Water Users

Klamath Water Users Association

Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations

American Rivers

California Trout

Friends of the River

Klamath Forest Alliance

North Coast Environmental Center

Northern California/Nevada Council, Federation of Fly Fishers

Salmon River Restoration Council

Trout Unlimited; and,

National Center for Conservation Science and Policy.