

OSU, Yurok Tribe partner to study Klamath River after dam removal

By **GEORGE PAVLEN**
Capital Press

KLAMATH, Calif. — On the precipice of the largest dam removal project in U.S. history, researchers at Oregon State University are partnering with a northern California tribe to envision what lies ahead for the Klamath River.

Demolition of the J.C. Boyle, Copco 1, Copco 2 and Iron Gate dams could begin as early as next year, though federal energy regulators are still reviewing plans submitted by the Klamath River Renewal Corp. to decommission and raze the structures.

Removal of the four dams is expected to open 400 miles of upstream spawning habitat for endangered salmon. It will also dramatically alter parts of the river system, impacting water quality, water use and the aquatic food web.

Desiree Tullos, professor of water resources engineering at OSU, is leading a multi-year study to assess these changes and help inform future management decisions in the basin.

“We want to fill in gaps in the Western science, as well as gaps in how we make equitable decisions based on both ecological science and Indig-



Copco No. 1 Dam on the Klamath River near Hornbrook, Calif., is one of four dams slated for removal.

Associated Press File

enous knowledge,” Tullos said.

To address the latter, OSU is working with the Yurok Tribe, which has fished for salmon in the Klamath River for centuries.

Barry McCovey Jr., director of the Yurok Tribal Fisheries Program, said the tribe has been fighting to remove the four Klamath River dams since they were built between 1903 and 1967. He esti-

mated the river has lost 90% of its historical fish runs, which once numbered in the millions.

“We’re trying to fix the ecosystem,” McCovey said. “We want to restore it so that

it’s intact for future generations, and for all the people to come.”

The collaboration with OSU, McCovey said, will help chart a future for the river after the dams are gone.

Tullos said the project was recently awarded \$870,000 from Oregon Sea Grant to conduct the research, including outreach among five key stakeholder groups — tribes, irrigators, commercial fishing, recreation and conservation organizations.

“The idea is really getting a very comprehensive view of how these stakeholders understand the system, and what their tools are to respond to these changes,” she said.

A big piece of the puzzle is learning how dam removal will affect water quality in the river. Reservoirs behind the dams have caused problems in the past with increasing water temperature and trapping nutrients such as phosphorous and nitrogen, resulting in harmful algal blooms.

From there, Tullos said researchers will be able to develop new ecological and cultural models for the river

based on interviews with stakeholders. Those models can then inform management decisions to maximize the river’s social and economic benefits.

“By working with the tribe and stakeholders in the basin we’ll capture a really comprehensive set of perspectives,” Tullos said. “And the more perspectives we have, the better decisions we’ll make.”

In addition to the Yurok Tribe, the research team includes Bryan Tilt, Julie Alexander, James Peterson and Guillermo Giannico of OSU, and Laurel Genzoli of the University of Montana. Tullos said she expects outreach in the basin will begin next year.

McCovey, with the tribe’s fisheries department, said the project is “a really great opportunity to get this right, and include Indigenous people in the decision-making process.”

“We can make smart management decisions accordingly, based on those modeled projections, so we don’t endanger anybody’s livelihood or any species,” McCovey said. “We definitely don’t want to go backwards.”

Fourth backyard flock tests positive for bird flu in Oregon

By **GEORGE PAVLEN**
Capital Press

SALEM — Another backyard poultry flock has tested positive for highly pathogenic avian influenza in Oregon’s Willamette Valley.

State agriculture officials confirmed the disease was detected July 6 in a non-commercial flock of about 40 chickens in Linn

County. The flock’s owner had contacted the Oregon Department of Agriculture to report sick and dying birds.

ODA says birds from the flock have since been euthanized, and will not enter the food system.

It is the fourth case of bird flu in a backyard flock in Oregon this year, with the first being reported May 6, also in Linn County. Two

other cases have been found in Lane and Polk counties. So far, the disease has not struck any commercial poultry in the state.

While bird flu does not pose any immediate public health concern, ODA advises both commercial poultry farmers and backyard flock owners to be vigilant with biosecurity measures. “Reducing or eliminating contact

between wild birds and domestic flocks is the best way to protect domestic birds from this disease,” the agency stated.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the latest strain of H5N1 bird flu has infected more than 40 million poultry in 37 states nationwide, along with 1,805 wild birds in 43 states.



Sierra Dawn McClain
Capital Press File
Bird flu has been found in backyard flocks in Oregon.



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