



AP Photo/Gosia Wozniacka

Federal legislation to assess 31 tribal fishing sites in Oregon and Washington state and make critical improvements to sewer and water systems has passed the U.S. House after three years of delays.

Tribal fishing bill clears US House

By GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press

Pacific Northwest tribes fighting to get the U.S. government to fully compensate them for the loss of dozens of homes and traditional fishing encampments to flooding caused by hydroelectric dams rejoiced Tuesday after federal legislation to address their cause cleared a first hurdle.

A key bill that cleared the U.S. House on Monday would provide \$11 million for improvements at alternative fishing sites created by the U.S. government after several massive dams built on the Columbia River caused flooding that destroyed tribal fishing sites beginning in the 1930s.

Over the years, the government has created 31 so-called “in lieu” fishing sites to compensate the tribes, but demand is high and several hundred tribal members now live year-round at camps that were intended to be seasonal, said Charles Hudson, director of government affairs with the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Conditions at some of the larger sites are unsanitary, with sewer problems, crowding and unsafe drinking water, he said.

The commission has identified 18 sites that need

particular attention in both Oregon and Washington state, including a site called Lone Pine, near The Dalles, and another called Cooks on the Washington side of the river.

“There are often multiple generations living on the sites,” he said. “The term ‘usual and accustomed fishing places’ is a term of law and culture and people want to live close to where their right to fish is — and for many of the people living in these areas, they are living as close as they possibly can.”

The bill also calls on the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs to assess all 31 sites dedicated to enabling the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs and Yakama to carry out their federally protected right to fish the river.

U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, an Oregon Democrat, introduced the House bill after visiting Lone Pine in 2016 and seeing the conditions there first-hand. His visit was prompted by an investigation by The Oregonian newspaper that described the U.S. government’s failure to meet its promises.

“Thanks to this bill, tribal communities will see much-needed, tangible improvements that will improve

their quality of life and fortify their connection to the Columbia,” Blumenauer said in a statement. “We must ensure the life-blood of their heritage is protected and respected.”

The bill now heads to the U.S. Senate, where similar legislation is pending.

A study undertaken by the Army Corps of Engineers determined that around the massive Bonneville Dam alone, tribal members had lost more than 80 homes that have not been replaced, Hudson said. The construction of major dams in John Day and The Dalles also caused significant losses, although those have not been quantified, he said.

An inter-tribal group is working to document how much housing was lost and come up with a proposal for adequate mitigation more than 70 years later, he added. Affordable housing close to fishing grounds is a critical need, Hudson said.

“There is a lot of historical mining of documents that has gone on, but a lot more is needed,” he said. “Quantification is a tricky one, because is a one-for-one replacement the right thing 70 years hence? Is there a survivor of that who was directly impacted by the loss of his or her home? Are there descendants who continue to be impacted?”

Large grid storage project near Klamath Falls gets federal approval

By JES BURNS and COURTNEY FLATT
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Federal energy regulators granted approval and a license Tuesday to an energy storage project near Klamath Falls. It’s the first facility of its kind in decades to be licensed in the Pacific Northwest and, if built, will be the largest energy storage facility in the region.

Developers of Swan Lake North pumped storage plan to build a new reservoir system to store electricity from the grid. When electricity is plentiful and inexpensive, pumps will push water to a 60-acre reservoir high on a hill. Then when demand rises, the facility will release that water over turbines to a lower reservoir. As with a hydroelectric dam, the spinning turbines generate electricity that can then be fed back to supplement the grid.

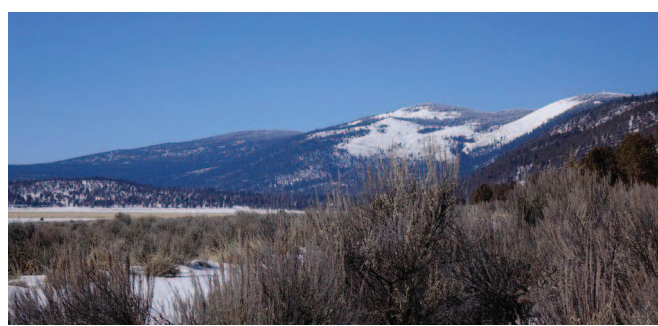
The \$800 million project has a 393-megawatt capacity — enough to meet the instantaneous demand of up to 390,000 homes.

Tuesday’s approval comes one day before the public gets a chance to weigh in on a separate, potentially much larger pumped-hydro project elsewhere in the Pacific Northwest.

That project would be developed outside Goldendale, Washington.

Rye Development and National Grid Ventures are working to develop both the Swan Lake and Goldendale energy storage projects.

“We are very pleased that the (Federal Energy Regulatory) Commission has



Jes Burns/Oregon Public Broadcasting

Rye Development plans to build a new pumped hydro energy storage facility at this site. The lower reservoir would be located on the low hill to the left, while the upper reservoir would be built up on the snowy ridge to the right.

issued a 50-year construction and operational license for the project and we look forward to the next phase of development,” Erik Steimle, Rye Development’s vice president, said in an email statement.

Bringing this kind of grid storage online has widely been seen as necessary to the development of alternative energy sources like wind and solar, which don’t continuously produce electricity.

Swan Lake North is located about 10 miles northeast of Klamath Falls in a rural farming area. Neighbors organized to oppose the project. Their primary concern is the planned construction of 33 miles of new high voltage power lines that will run across federal and private land. The lines are likely to disrupt farm practices and local views.

Dan Cohan, who lives along the power line path, said the approval of the project has been expected in the community. Cohan’s primary concern is the effect the power lines will have on migratory birds in the area.

The region is a major stop-over for the Pacific Flyway, one of the major migratory bird paths in the country.

“I think there is going to be an impact,” Cohan said. “They’re going to have bird strikes on the infrastructure and the power lines — just because of the sheer density of waterfowl and migratory birds that occur in this area.”

He still hopes, despite Swan Lake being granted a license, the company will do more to protect birds and farm life in the area.

Steimle said Swan Lake North will move into the preconstruction phase, which includes contracting and equipment procurement for the project.

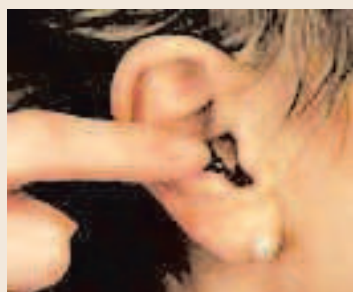
The proposed pumped hydro storage project in Goldendale would have three times the storage capacity as Swan Lake.

Each newly built reservoir in the Goldendale project would be about 60 acres in size. The pipe — also known as a penstock — and power house are underground. The capacity of the project is 1,200 megawatts.

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