

Congress passes Columbia housing law

A plan to construct a tribal village along the Columbia River for families who were not compensated for the loss of their homes when dams were constructed has garnered Congressional support.

Last week the U.S. Senate overwhelmingly approved a bill, 99-1, that directs the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to complete a village plan and acquire land where the village would be built.

The Corps of Engineers constructed and operates major dams on the river. Now the bill heads to President Donald Trump for final approval.

Four Columbia River tribes—Warm Springs, Yakama, Umatilla and Nez Perce—were affected by the construction of three major dams: Bonneville, The Dalles and John Day.

Many were given payments to leave the river as compensation for their loss. But some weren't.

A study commissioned by the Corps found at least 44 families were not compensated for their losses.

Last year, the Corps of Engineers announced plans to build a village, and said it would dedicate \$1.56 million to cover the planning of the project while the rest of the funding would be contingent on congressional approval.

But the Corps expended its 2017 budget without funding the planning stage of the village, and was denied a request for funding by the federal Office of Management and Budget.

In denying the request, the OMB said the Corps lacked authority to move ahead with the project, and that it was not the mission of the Corps to provide housing.

The new legislation grants the Corps the ability to proceed.

Historically, there were tribal villages and traditional fishing sites all along the river, including the once-vibrant Celilo Falls. There, water crashed over jagged basalt, and tribal fishermen used nets to pull salmon from the rushing water.

But the falls and neighboring villages were inundated when The Dalles Dam was completed in 1957.



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The Let's Talk Diversity Coalition is doing a **Cultural Awareness training class** on Thursday, November 8. The training will provide insight on how poverty specifically affects the health of your clients, customers, students, family and community members. It's from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Madras. You can get more info and register online at Let's Talk Diversity dot net or contact Jesus at 541-475-4292. The registration deadline is November 1.

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