

Kathleen George co-hosts press conference on hydropower report

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals staff writer

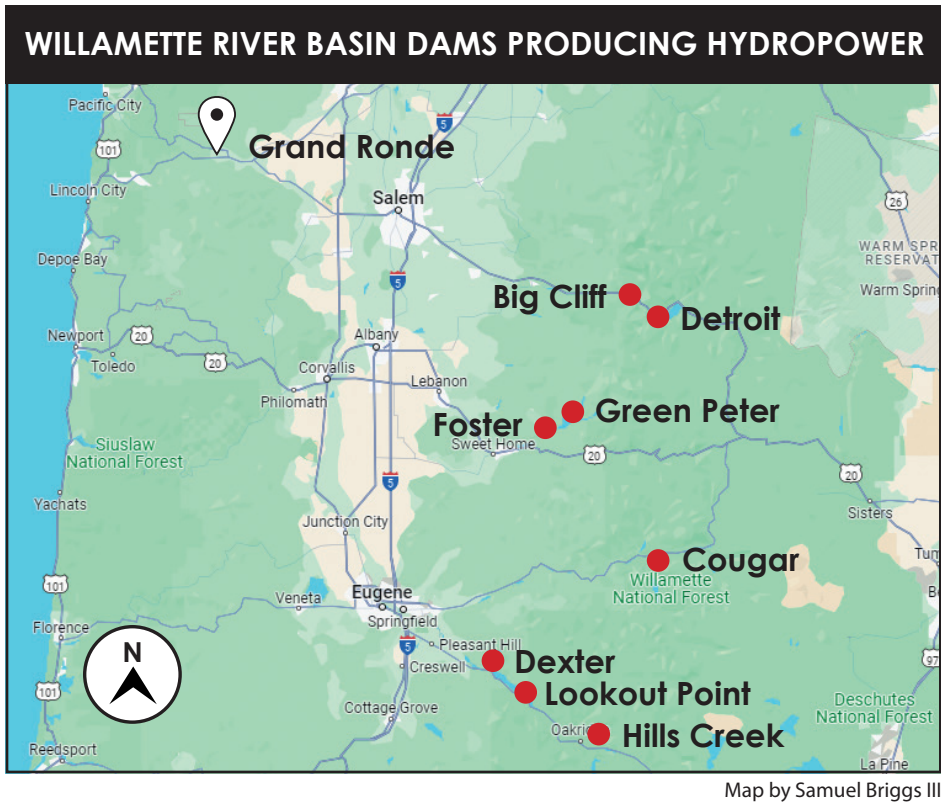
Tribal Council member Kathleen George co-hosted a virtual press conference on Thursday, July 11, regarding the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers not meeting a congressionally-man-



Kathleen George was joined by Native Fish Society Legislative and Policy Director Jennifer Fairbrother.

According to a press release from Signal Group, which organized the conference, the Willamette River Basin dams are driving native salmon populations to extinction and burdening Oregon communities with higher energy bills from an uneconomical power source.

“It’s important to share why this is something that is really worthy of attention,” George said. “The Army Corps of Engineers was supposed to submit the report on deauthorizing hydropower at two dams in the Willamette Valley that creates serious migration problems for fish. Despite this clear deadline, that report has not arrived. A late report generally wouldn’t be newsworthy but in this case, it was a critical report the entire region is waiting for...Our Willamette River salmon and steelhead are out of time and on the brink of extinction. Federal, state and Tribal scientists agree and they also agree the very best solution is to provide safe fish passage through the Willamette dams but this cannot be done without the



production of the right report from the Army Corps of Engineers.”
The deadline for the report was June 30, 2024. After being contacted by Smoke Signals on Friday, July 19, Army Corps of Engineers Portland District Senior Public Affairs Specialist Kerry Solan said the Portland District has since completed the report and sent it to headquarters.
“We can’t speak to the disposition (of the) report or the process anymore because the report is currently undergoing administration review,” she said.
Solan added that the report was sent from the Portland District to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters in Washington, D.C. From there, it goes to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works before being sent to Congress.
“The report is currently with the

Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works and is undergoing administration review,” an Army spokesperson confirmed on Monday, July 22.
According to the press release from Signal Group, in the Water Resources Development Act of 2020, Congress directed the Corps to submit a report on deauthorizing hydropower at two dams (Detroit and Cougar) in the Willamette River Basin, but the agency failed to submit its analysis. In 2022, Congress again directed the Corps to submit a study determining effects of deauthorizing hydropower at all eight hydropower dams (Foster, Big Cliff, Detroit, Cougar, Green Peter, Dexter, Lookout Point and Hills Creek) by June 2024.
“The Corps once again failed to submit its report on time, depriving Congress of essential analysis and information for informed decision-making and critical management decisions in the Willamette Valley system,” the release said.
George said the delays put not only Tribal lifeways at risk, but those for all Oregonians.
“I’m a Tribal leader and the reason I am here today is because the people of my Tribe and the people of Oregon are all part of a natural

and cultural heritage,” she said. “A life of living with our salmon. That lifeway and these fish are in peril. For Tribal people, there is no good way to live without living in balance with our rivers and our salmon. The experience of catching salmon in the Willamette is one we all deserve but those opportunities are quickly diminishing unless we do the right thing and pursue deauthorizing hydropower at the Willamette dams so our salmon and steelhead can safely pass upstream to the high quality habitat above those dams and safely make it back down and to the ocean. This is critical. Our fish are simply running out of time.”
George noted that Tribal leaders, the state of Oregon, Bonneville Power Association, scientists and conservation advocates are united in finding the same solution.
“The power produced at these dams is the most expensive way to make hydropower that we have in the system,” she said. “The Army Corps own analysis found the dams would lose a stunning \$939 million over the next 30 years if we continue...because the cost of generation at these dams far outweighs the revenue. The people who are paying for that are the ratepayers throughout the BPA service areas. The entire West is paying for this expensive hydropower at the expense of killing salmon.”
Fairbrother noted it has been 25 years since these fish were listed under the Endangered Species Act. Recently, the status was updated and the populations continue to decline.
“It is likely that by 2040 some of these (salmon and steelhead) runs will be nearing extinction or going extinct,” she said. “That is just 16 years away and these fish can’t wait any longer for the Corps to stop dragging its feet.”
After the report has been sent to Congress, the next step is to ensure it is complete, Fairbrother said.
“The Corps has known for decades that effective fish passage is key to recovery,” she said. “We hope (this report) can inform decision making on whether to deauthorize hydropower to these dams.” ■

TRIBAL VETERANS
SERVICE OFFICE

Contact the TVSO Office if you have any questions or for more event information.

CTGR Tribal VSO@GrandRonde.Org

503-879-1484

AUGUST 2024 EVENTS

Veterans Garden

Garden beds have been placed and are in the back of the Community Programs Building. Veterans are welcome to come garden whenever they have a moment. Supplies are in the tote.

Canoe Journey

Interested Tribal Veterans, contact the TVSO office. I have five sets of camping supplies available for tribal veterans who wish to camp during Protocol (July 31 to August 5). First-come, first-served.

Veterans Golf

Veteran makes the arrangements. There are five golf vouchers remaining for the month of August. Come by and pick up a pre-paid card to take to Dallas Golf Club. Veteran will need to call them directly to make an appointment for “T” time.

Please note: Pick up times are between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Thursdays are the best day to pick up due to it being the normal walk-in day.

Save the Date for Upcoming Events:

Parfleche & Painting Classes ~ Sept. 11 and Sept. 18 at the Community Programs Building from 4 to 7 p.m.

Tentative September Events:

Veteran Guitar Music Classes – Due to popular demand, we are setting up another guitar class for veterans. Veteran Cooking Classes – Four cooking classes for veterans.

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