

The New York Times

Green

A Blog About Energy and the Environment

FEBRUARY 19, 2010, 9:02 AM

Agreement Reached on Klamath River

By *KRISTINA SHEVORY*

Four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath River in Oregon and Northern California will be removed under [an agreement](#) that ends decades of fighting between fishermen, farmers, environmental and Native American groups over water and fishing rights.

On Thursday, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the chief executive of the utility PacifiCorp, Greg Abel, and three Native American tribes inked two agreements outlining the dismantling of the dams, the [restoration of 350 miles of the Klamath River](#) and water-sharing rights between farms and fish.

"The Klamath River, which for years was synonymous with controversy, is now a stunning example of how cooperation and partnership can resolve difficult conflicts," said Mr. Salazar in [a statement](#).

The Klamath River has been the site of intense fighting between farmers for more water and fishermen for improved fishing rights. In 2001, irrigation water was turned off to save salmon during a drought. When the water was restored, thousands of salmon died. Critics contend that the dams block salmon and promote disease because they raise the water temperature.

The four dams -- three in Oregon and one in California -- are owned by PacifiCorp and are used to generate electricity for both states. The first dam will be removed in 2020, with the remaining three following as soon as possible.

Their removal, however, hinges on Congressional approval and the Department of the Interior's environmental review. By March 2012, the department must decide whether the dams' removal is in the best interest of the public and would restore salmon to the basin.

"Today's historic agreement is testament to the great things we can achieve by working together," [said Governor Schwarzenegger](#) in prepared remarks. "Everyone here cares about the magnificent Klamath River, and we are taking action now to preserve this natural wonder for generations to come."

It will cost an estimated \$450 million to remove the dams. Roughly \$250 million will come from a sale of California bonds and \$200 million will come from surcharges on PacifiCorp customers in Oregon and California, said Art Sasse, a spokesman for the utility.

Over 10 years, the Klamath Basin will be restored at a cost of \$1 billion, paid for by the federal government.

