

**DENNIS LINTHICUM**  
**STATE SENATOR**  
District - 28



**OREGON STATE SENATE**  
**900 COURT STREET NE, S-305**  
**SALEM, OR 97301**

Department of the Interior  
Secretary Ryan Zinke  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington DC 20240  
(202) 208-3100

Re: Klamath River Dam Removals

October 20, 2017

On October 17, 2016, President Obama's Secretary of the Department of the Interior (DOI), Sally Jewel, submitted a recommendation to the Secretary of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) advocating for the removal of four hydroelectric facilities on the Klamath River.

Jewel's recommendation is diametrically opposed to the opinions of my constituents, in Southern Oregon. Nearly 80% of voters in Klamath County, Oregon and Siskiyou County, California, where the dams are located, expressed their strong opposition to destroying these four important facilities. These dams currently provide a consistent supply of low-cost, renewable, hydro-electric base-load grid-power.

Jewel writes, "While these dams brought prosperity to many, their construction came at a steep cost to tribes and fishing communities. The returning runs of salmon repeatedly bludgeoning themselves against the new dam walls were a harbinger of a declining fishery that cast a cloud over those who, for millennia, have called the Klamath home."

These statements are all misleading. First, the dams not only brought prosperity to the region, but they *continue to* bring prosperity to all people groups throughout the Pacific Northwest. Throughout Oregon and the Northwest, enormous percentages of electrical grid supply is provided by the inexpensive, run-of-river hydro-electric generation facilities in the region.

Second, I would suggest that salmon are not "bludgeoning themselves" against existing dam structures that have been in place for over a half-century. School children know that salmon return to the place where they were hatched to spawn. This means that scores of generations and millions and millions of salmon have never tried to swim past

900 Court St. NE, S-305, Salem, OR 97301  
(503) 986-1728 • Sen.DennisLinthicum@oregonlegislature.gov

the dams. Also, fish ladders currently exist to help native fishes return to their spawning grounds and they have been successfully navigating these waters for decades.

Third, the problems associated with enormous volumes of sludge accumulated behind the dam structures ought to be a genuine concern for future generations of salmon, trout, aquatic wildlife and river habitat. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement did not address or investigate mitigation efforts that might be required to handle the potential damage from the estimated 20 million cubic yards of accumulated sediment. This issue is not easily side-stepped because it is an equivalent 2 million ten-yard dump truck loads of silt, sediment and sludge which will be dumped into the river system. Surely, the existing downstream salmon fisheries will bear the burden from this harmful sludge.

Fourth, “the greatest harbinger of a declining fisheries which might cast clouds over” those who live, work, and play in the Klamath region needs to be correctly identified. It isn’t dams. Rather, like the rampant wolf population explosions in Montana, the salmon declines are directly related to federal policies.

The passage of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) in 1972 committed the United States to long-term management, conservation, and moratoriums on taking marine mammals, like the seals, sea lions and porpoises. Studies by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have documented the enormous growth in sea lion populations and the negative impact that seals and sea lions have on free swimming salmonids in rivers and estuaries in the Northwest.

This is no small matter. The sea lion population has ballooned to over 300,000 mammals in the Pacific Northwest. Each adult lion consumes nearly 18 pounds of fish per day. This equates to a take of nearly one million tons of fish annually.

Additionally, salmon are a transpacific anadromous species that spends between three and five years in the Pacific Ocean migratory patterns before returning to their spawning grounds. During this time in the open ocean uncontrolled foreign fishing fleets have years of unfettered access to these fish populations.

Therefore, the dams are not the problem.

The salmon populations have been thriving while the dams have been in place. The dams provide inexpensive, renewable electricity, flow control for watershed volume and temperature, recreation and agricultural reservoir capacity, and Forest Service fire suppression storage in the extremely remote regions of Northern California and Southern Oregon.

Decommissioning and removing the dams owned by PacifiCorp is not about the river, its cultural significance, jobs, race, ag-business, or water. Rather it's a potpourri of special interests, rent-seekers disguised as noble businessmen, enlarged bureaucratic dominion and strategically manipulated environmental emotions.

I humbly ask for your consideration of the items I have enumerated here and the evidence that has been accumulated by the investigating agencies. I also suggest that a willingness to listen to the constituents who have lived, worked and invested their lives in the Klamath River watershed should play an important role in your determination.

In closing, as a State Senator representing Southern Oregon, my constituents have made their voices clear. The dams are viable economic assets that taxpayers have funded. Destroying these resources will not contribute to **Making America Great Again**.

Therefore, my request is that the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) deny the decommissioning of the four dams within the Klamath River system.

Sincerely,



Dennis Linthicum  
OR State Senate – District 28