Secretary Salazar, Governors Kulongoski and Schwarzenegger Announce Agreement on Klamath River Basin Restoration

SALEM, Oregon – Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today joined Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, PacificCorp Chief Executive Officer Greg Abel and the chairmen of the Klamath, Yurok and Karuk Tribes in announcing final agreements that could potentially lead to removal of four dams on the Klamath River and the largest river restoration project in our nation's history.

The Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement and the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement provide a framework for removal of the dams by 2020 contingent on Congressional approval and a scientific assessment by the Interior Department confirming that their removal is indeed in the public interest. The agreements also outline activities that would be undertaken to restore fisheries and provide water supply certainty to communities and water users in the Basin.

"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 Secretary Salazar. "The Agreements provide a path forward to meet the needs of local communities, tribes, farmers, fishermen and other stakeholders while restoring a beautiful river and its historic salmon runs," Salazar said.

"Today we celebrate a thoughtful, collaborative approach that will bring certainty and stability to water issues to support agriculture and, at the same time, will restore the Klamath River to support wild salmon populations," said Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski. "A restored basin will serve all Oregonians – from the basin to our coastal communities – who depend on the river and its resources for their social and economic livelihoods."

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

"Our top priority at PacifiCorp has been and continues to be protecting our customers in terms of cost and liability, said Greg Abel, PacifiCorp Chairman & CEO. "This is another significant milestone toward establishing the framework that ensures our customers' best interests are front and center, no matter what the ultimate public policy decision is in terms of dam removal."

"These agreements will vastly improve habitat conditions for fish by re-establishing the connectivity between physical, chemical and biological processes within the basin that are essential to ecosystem health and the sustainability of the basin's valuable natural resources," said Jane Lubchenco, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator. NOAA, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, is the federal agency responsible for the stewardship of the nation's living marine resources and their habitats.

Interior will undertake a rigorous, science-based analysis, as well as a full analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act, and make a final determination by March 31, 2012, whether the benefits of removing the dams will advance restoration of salmon in the Klamath Basin and be in the public interest. The decision will be made in consultation with state, local, and tribal governments and other stakeholders, as appropriate.

The potential removal of the dams is a key piece of a major restoration effort for the Klamath developed by more than 30 diverse stakeholders, including California and Oregon, three tribes, PacifiCorp, water users and conservation groups. The restoration agreements, if confirmed by Congress and fully implemented, would provide sustainable allocation of water for fish harvest, agriculture uses, national wildlife refuges, and other users.

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