



Media Release

North Coast Water Board approves new fish hatchery, part of historic renewal of Klamath River

Project will help rejuvenate fish population after dams are removed

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Contact: Blair Robertson – [Information Officer](#)

SANTA ROSA – The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board approved a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit yesterday that will allow the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) to operate an upgraded fish hatchery on Fall Creek, a tributary of the Klamath River in Siskiyou County.

“California continues to make important progress to restore the health and vitality of the Klamath River, an ecological and cultural treasure that many tribal nations, communities and livelihoods in our state depend on,” said Governor Gavin Newsom. “This new hatchery will support natural salmon runs that have been blocked for more than a century, righting a historical wrong and revitalizing the environment and local economy for generations to come.”

Once upgrades are constructed, the Fall Creek Hatchery will replace the Iron Gate Hatchery, which is being decommissioned as part of the [Klamath River Renewal Project](#) that will remove four hydroelectric dams and restore a free-flowing river. PacifiCorp, the operator of the dams and owner of both hatcheries, jointly applied for and received the permit with CDFW.

“The North Coast Water Board is proud to take this crucial regulatory step to allow the operation of a newly upgraded fish hatchery that will help the salmon population flourish once again in the Klamath River, to the benefit of tribes, the environment and the local economy,” said Hector Bedolla, chair of the board.

The hatchery upgrades, expected to be completed by the end of 2023, will operate for about eight years to allow for the gradual reintroduction of anadromous fish within the California portion of the Klamath River Basin. The four dams, built on the Lower Klamath River between 1903 and 1962, caused water quality impacts and barriers to fish passage that decimated fish populations in the river over several decades.

“This is the beginning of a new era for fish in the Klamath River, and is anticipated to restore better water quality, better habitat for fish, and revitalize the tribes that rely on salmon for their culture and sustenance,” said CDFW Director Chuck Bonham. “Salmon and steelhead have been blocked from reaching more than 300 miles of potential spawning and rearing habitat for a very long time; now there is the chance for these species to thrive again in the basin.”

The hatchery is designed to simulate natural cold-water streams and will nurture Chinook and coho salmon. It will have the capacity to produce up to 3,250,000 Chinook and 75,000 coho salmon annually.



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

STATE WATER RESOURCES CONTROL BOARD

1001 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 • Mailing Address: P.O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-0100 • www.waterboards.ca.gov



The initiative to remove the dams on the Lower Klamath River began in 2006 and culminated with the [Klamath Hydroelectric Agreement](#) in 2016 between California and Oregon, the Yurok and Karuk Tribes, PacifiCorp, fishing groups and other stakeholders. With approval of the agreement on Nov. 17, 2022, by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which regulates the transmission and sale of electricity and natural gas in interstate commerce, the decision to remove the dams became final, and the Klamath River Renewal Project began.

Demolition of the four dams is scheduled to begin in May 2024 and conclude by mid-August 2024. Post-drawdown activities, including restoration of newly exposed areas within the footprint of the dams and their reservoirs, monitoring, and adaptive management, are expected to continue through 2030.

The adoption of the NPDES permit for the hatchery is one of several actions the regional board will take as the multi-year project moves from construction through completion.

The North Coast Water Board's mission is to develop and enforce water quality objectives and implement plans that will best protect the region's waters while recognizing our local differences in climate, topography, geology and hydrology.