

SGM/PT

State Water Resources Control Board
Division of Water Rights
Water quality Certification Program
Attention: Mr. Parker Thaler
P.O. Box 2000
Sacramento. Ca. 95812-2000

STATE WATER RESOURCES
CONTROL BOARD

2016 JAN 27 AM 11: 16

DIV OF WATER RIGHTS
SACRAMENTO

Dear Mr. Thaler:

I am an 84 year old retired Civil Engineer and I am concerned about the Klamath River that I presently live along and the river that I have been associated with all of those 84 years and the river that I have had a historical association with since the year 1860 when my great grandfather came to the mid-river with 2 brothers and a sister. Three of those four made this portion of the Klamath River their home for the rest of their lives. I am concerned about the great push to make this river something it has never been while using a species of fish that historically never permanently inhabited the middle to upper river and to use whatever other means they can to achieve an agenda not, in my mind, compatible with the best interests of the river below the existing dams.

I fervently trust that the Dept. of Water Resources will strongly consider the historic water quality of this naturally polluted stream in preparing the water quality certification report. The comments by Mr. George Gibbs in his journal as he traveled up the river as part of the treaty expedition of 1851 speaks to the river's water quality before serious mining started in the area. His journal has been published by the University of California. Also comments by the explorer Fremont when in the region of the river's source, Upper Klamath Lake, are pertinent to water quality existing at that time.

From my own recollections, I can only remember the river with the dams already constructed with the exception of Iron Gate which was constructed later and which stopped the severe fluctuations in the river flow. However, my mother, born in 1909 and my grandmother, born in 1875 have passed on stories about the fish in the river and the condition of the river that they observed during their lifetimes along the river between Seiad Valley and Happy Camp. On some years they noted that the warm, low flow in the river led to a gill disease killing many of the salmon in their reach of the river. At these times, my great grandfather gave the children sharp sticks to use in throwing dead fish back into the river to help prevent the stench created by the many dead fish. And then, during almost all years the large red crawdads would come up the river by the thousands and the family would go to the river bar to catch and roast them. This tradition stopped after completion of the first dam because cooler water in the river created by the reservoir put an end to the crawdad runs. The brothers of these two ladies, and there were several, were avid fishermen and never passed on a single word about catching silver (coho) salmon and my mother, who also was a fisherman, has said she never heard of

silvers until in the 1950's when talking to the then game warden. The mid to upper river was just too warm for coho under any configuration of survival.

Pollutants added to the river at it's source by the volcanic host rock strata and by upper basin wildlife will not change no matter what happens to the dams. It is true that still water created by the reservoirs provides a good place for the formation of algae, but so does eddies and pools along the river. Toxins created by the algae may be poisonous but the river has always been unhealthy to drink. I have seen no published accounts of humans or fish getting sick from those toxins which, does not say that they are not present, but perhaps the toxin concentration downstream is diluted to the point where there is no serious health risk.

Water temperature is another issue. Water coming out of that large, shallow lake that forms the head of the Klamath River is a glorious source of warm water in late summer and fall and no finagling will change that unless you cut off all flow from that source which, of course, is not possible. Even the 300 plus CFS flow that emerges within the confines of the canyon through the cascades would be warm before it got far downstream with the normal 100 degree plus September temperatures. Removal of the dams will take away the only possibility of controlling the river temperature. What will the fisheries people do for large flow releases during times of fish die-offs downstream as they have called for in the past during these times? The notorious blue-green algae certainly is not confined to just the Klamath River.

The owners of dams providing some justifiable benefit should not be held responsible for incoming water quality or outgoing water quality unless it can be shown that they are contributing to downstream poor water quality to an extent that exceeds pre-dam conditions. I do not think it has been shown that downstream water quality degradation and summer and fall high water temperatures can be attributed to the dams on the Klamath River.

I know spawning habitat has nothing to do with water quality certification, but I will discuss that issue also. The Klamath River canyon through the Cascades has a quite steep gradient and not much residual sand and gravel to provide spawning areas for the salmon to start with and then would be difficult for salmon to navigate after already having fought their way up through over two hundred miles of warm, rough water. I have heard that excitement was generated at Klamath Falls one year before dam construction when salmon were actually spotted trying to jump the falls. If this were a regular occurrence, it would not have been considered unusual. It is my understanding that fish ladders were included in initial dam construction plans but were, for some reason, not put in. I would guess that studies conducted at the time indicated that the ladders would be of little benefit because the worn out fish would not swim up the steep channel anyway. At the least, a search of the archives should indicate the reasons for dispensing with the ladders. If the souls involved wish to transport fish to the spawning beds above Klamath Lake, so be it, but do not rely on the fish getting there by themselves even if the dams were take out.

In closing, I trust that your analysis will give due weight to downstream benefits provided by the Klamath River Dams.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Glen O. Briggs". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Glen O. Briggs
Civil Engineer, Retired
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