

October 18, 2006 **Press Release** | Contact: Danielle Langone (202) 225-6416

WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio today requested a hearing to be scheduled in Coos Bay to discuss recommendations by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) for management of the Klamath River. FERC published its Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Klamath Hydroelectric Project's request for a new operating license late last month. Federal agents, including NOAA Fisheries and the Bureau of Land and Management, have recommended a variety of conditions for re-licensing of the project. Some of these conditions could improve salmon runs and help fishing families and coastal communities that rely on them. FERC can accept or reject the conditions proposed by other federal agencies. It can also build on those conditions and recommend further changes in management.

FERC has scheduled four hearings to discuss re-licensing the Klamath River dams, which are owned by Pacificorp. Three hearings are scheduled in California—two in Yreka and one in Eureka—and one hearing is scheduled in Klamath Falls, Oregon.

“I feel strongly that at least one of the hearings should be held on the coast, since there has been such a dramatic impact on fishers and the coastal community because of the poor Klamath returns,” DeFazio said.

Earlier this year, the salmon fishing season along the Oregon and Northern California coasts was closed, and the Department of Commerce declared a fishing disaster. Management of the Klamath was an underlying factor in the closure of the fishing season, causing an estimated \$60 million in damage to the commercial fishing industry.

“FERC needs to take strong action in the re-licensing process to help restore the Klamath River and the health of the Klamath salmon run,” DeFazio said. “Fishing families and coastal communities have clearly suffered from decisions regarding the Klamath that they have no control over. These families and communities deserve to be heard by FERC.”

The full text of the letter follows.

October 18, 2006

Chairman Joseph T. Kelliher
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
888 First Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20426

Dear Chairman Kelliher:

I am writing regarding the schedule of hearings that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) has announced with respect to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Klamath Hydroelectric Project. I would request that you schedule an additional hearing to be held in Coos Bay, Oregon. A hearing along the Oregon Coast would provide salmon fishers who have been negatively impacted by decisions on the management of the Klamath River an opportunity to be heard by FERC.

As you may know, earlier this year the Pacific Fishery Management Council closed salmon fishing along 700 miles of the Oregon and Northern California Coasts. The Department of Commerce has declared a fishing disaster. And the states of Oregon and California have estimated direct damages to the commercial fishing industry and downstream impacts at more than \$60 million from the closure.

The underlying cause of the closure is mismanagement of the Klamath River. As you know, federal agencies have proposed a variety of conditions for the re-licensing of the Klamath Hydroelectric Project that could improve salmon runs and help fishing families and coastal communities that rely on such economic activity. NOAA Fisheries originally recommended that the dams be removed. Lacking the authority to order that, however, NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have recommended fish screens and ladders be added to improve fish passage. The Bureau of Land Management has recommended increased flows to aid fish. FERC needs to consider these proposed conditions carefully and understand the beneficial impact they could have for families and communities along the Oregon Coast.

Fishing families and coastal communities have clearly suffered from decisions regarding the Klamath that they have no control over. These families and communities deserve to be heard by FERC.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

/s/

PETER DeFAZIO
Member of Congress

cc:

Commissioner Suedeen G. Kelly
Commissioner Phillip D. Moeller
Commissioner Marc Spitzer
Commissioner Jon Wellinghoff