

## Lawmakers push to keep four hydro dams running, cite need for electricity

By Dylan Darling

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Federal lawmakers representing Northern California are trying to stop the removal of four power dams along the Klamath River by cutting off the flow of study funding.

U.S. Rep. Tom McClintock, R-Fair Oaks, added an amendment to the House's continuing resolution before it was approved Feb. 19 that would cut \$1.9 million for studies by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"At a time when Californians are paying the highest electricity prices in the continental United States and when officials can't guarantee enough electricity to keep the lights on, the decision to deliberately destroy 155 megawatts of the cleanest and cheapest electricity available is simply insane," McClintock said in a statement.

Built between 1908 and 1962, the dams — three in Siskiyou County and one in Oregon — produce enough power for 70,000 homes, but they cut off an estimated 300 miles of salmon spawning habitat.

Last year more than 40 groups, including farms, environmentalists and American Indian tribes, signed an agreement to explore taking out the dams.

The accord is touted as a way to end long-standing disputes in the Klamath Basin over water.

In 2001 the federal government cut basin irrigation deliveries, causing a summer of protests in Klamath Falls, Ore.

Joining McClintock in opposing dam removal is Rep. Wally Herger, R-Chico, who called it "just a bad idea" Friday.

He said the Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors has voted to oppose the removal.

"The citizens of Siskiyou County have overwhelmingly come out and indicated that they are opposed to these dams being removed," Herger said.

Like McClintock, Herger said the dams are a source of inexpensive electricity.

Removal of the dams, which are owned by PacifiCorp of Portland, Ore., would be the largest in the history of the country, said Glen Spain, northwest regional director for the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations. He said that's in terms of number of dams and length of river restored.

Whether the dams come out or not, he said the groups on both sides of the debate need to learn from the studies under way by the Bureau of Reclamation and Fish and Wildlife.

"Even the opponents to dam removal want to know, and need to know, the facts," Spain said.

Calling McClintock's amendment a "poorly thought-out idea," Spain said he doesn't think it has much chance of passing through the Senate.



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