

Chairman Edwards, Members of the Committee,

My family farms and ranches in both Oregon and California. My great-grandfather sat for many years as a board member for the Klamath Irrigation District.

I'm a graduate of Eastern Oregon University and interned for Oregon State Senator Eugene Timms in 1999. In 2010, I worked as a Legislative Aide for Oregon State Senator Doug Whitsett.

I now have the honor to be a County Supervisor (Commissioner) in Siskiyou County, California. I'm not here to tell you how to run the State of Oregon, but I am here to ask you not to advance actions that will negatively impact the constituents of my county.

We are the ones that will be forced to live with the consequences of removal of the Klamath River Hydropower Dams.

Siskiyou County has grave concerns about the release of nearly 20 million cubic yards of sediments behind the dams. This release may result in massive destruction of the ecosystem, a fact recognized by the Department of the Interior (DOI), although DOI claims the damage may be short-lived. Their studies acknowledge that we will not know if restoration through dam removal is successful until possibly 2050.

Meanwhile, with the dams still in, we are experiencing record runs of returning salmon on the Klamath River, which soundly challenges the argument that the existence of the dams is harming fish.

The Iron-Gate Dam Fish Hatchery produces 6 million young fish a year and this has been made possible because of the lowest dam. The stratification of layers of water in the dam is an important adjunct function of the dam and is responsible for the hatchery's historically acknowledged success in producing consistently enhanced salmon populations. This helps not just California fisherman, but the Oregon Coastal fishing industry as well. There is no existing viable plan to keep this important hatchery open once Iron-Gate Dam is gone, just paper promises.

You will hear claims that these dams produce no irrigation water. This past summer, 20,000 acre/feet was released from the lower dams instead of Klamath Lake to meet minimum fish flow needs.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in an August 8, 2014 press release stated, "This proposal is an opportunity to positively contribute to the health of federally listed fish species in Upper Klamath Lake and the Klamath River, supports tribal interests, and will prove beneficial to Project irrigators for the 2014 water year during these critical drought conditions."

This recognized benefit will be gone when the dams are gone.

Some claim these agreements are about more than dam removal. But back on June 19, 2008, Klamath County legal counsel, who is now a judge appointed by Gov. Kulongoski, stated “The Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement is a dam removal agreement whose signers agree to support and advocate for dam removal. While this point is obvious, I raise it because I have heard people express general support for the agreement but not for dam removal. If you do not support dam removal, this is the wrong agreement to sign. I see no way around this basic point.”

The Siskiyou County Grange, Siskiyou County Cattlemen’s and Cattlewomen’s Association oppose Dam Removal because they are pro-agriculture.

The Shasta Indians, the indigenous tribe for where the dams are located, oppose dam removal.

Our state legislators and our federal congressman oppose Dam Removal. Around 80 percent of Siskiyou County voters voted NO to dam removal. My district voted overwhelmingly in opposition to dam removal, including 77 percent of the Tulelake Basin which I have the honor to represent.

As I said at the outset, I’m not telling you how to run the State of Oregon; I’m asking that you don’t make decisions where we in Siskiyou County may face the brunt of the negative consequences.

Thank you for your time.

Brandon A. Criss, MPA  
Siskiyou County, California Supervisor (Commissioner) District 1