

May 6, 2021

Oregon State Legislature - Joint Subcommittee on Capital Construction - 2021-05-07-13-00

Subject: Wallowa Lake Dam Rehabilitation Project
Public Testimony

Dear Members of the Committee:

My name is Morton D. McMillen and I am providing both written and oral testimony in support of the Wallowa Lake Dam Rehabilitation Project (Project) on behalf of the Wallowa Lake Irrigation District (District). I am serving as the Project Manager for the District, the owner and operator of Wallowa Lake Dam and Reservoir, to plan, design, and construct the Project. One of the District's Board of Directors, Joe Dawson, is also scheduled to provide oral testimony.

I am a native of Wallowa County and currently own a small ranch within the County. I grew up in Swamp Creek where I worked on several ranches and farms that received irrigation water from Wallowa Lake Dam. My involvement in the Project started in 2000 when I conducted a dam safety inspection and analysis of the existing dam. I have continued to provide planning and engineering support to the District since this initial dam safety review.

I have attached a two-page summary of the Project which outlines the purpose, history, benefits, budget request and schedule for the Project. My oral testimony will follow the basic information presented within this document.

Over the past year, the District has worked closely with the State of Oregon, Nez Perce Tribe (NPT), and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) allocating 5,000 acre-feet of water from the reservoir to support fish habitat improvement conditions. The MOU is signed and ready for implementation when the dam rehabilitation is complete, representing a truly collaborative approach to managing our critical water resource for multi-beneficial use. The District is continuing to work with these key stakeholders, as well as other local, state, and federal agencies, to advance the reintroduction of Sockeye Salmon into Wallowa Lake and provide effective fish passage for existing native and anadromous fish species at the dam. Our team has developed a Project configuration which addresses the required dam safety improvements with fish passage facilities. Our well-established and strong working relationships with our key stakeholders provide the foundation for efficient implementation of the Project.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Project. Wallowa Lake Dam is critical infrastructure for the Wallowa Valley providing multiple benefits to the local community and our natural resources. The dam rehabilitation will ensure long term economic stability, public safety, and extensive benefits to the community and natural resources.

Sincerely,

Morton D. McMillen, P.E.
Project Manager