

# PacifiCorp seeks permits to remove dam

**Power down** | The cost of upgrading Condit Dam for migrating salmon is too much, the utility says

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Following years of negotiations and talks with regulators and environmental groups, PacifiCorp has begun filing permit applications to remove a hydroelectric dam on the White Salmon River in the Columbia River Gorge.

Just north of the confluence of the White Salmon and Columbia rivers about 50 miles east of Portland, Condit Dam has produced hydroelectric power since 1913. The dam has a generating capacity of 14.7 megawatts, enough power for about 7,800 homes.

In February, a settlement agreement extended the Washington

dam's operation from 2006 to late 2008, with dam decommissioning and removal scheduled for October 2008. The company says it has begun filing draft county permit applications for dam removal.

In a news release, the company said it has asked the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission whether local permitting is required under the Federal Power Act.

As a state-regulated utility, PacifiCorp must demonstrate to the state utilities commission that it has prudently managed the costs of removing Condit Dam to protect ratepayers, which means local permits may not be necessary, the company said.

"It is our intention to work with the counties to obtain these permits," said Gail Miller, project manager. "However, at the same time, the settlement parties felt it was prudent and reasonable to ask FERC to tell us whether these

permits are necessary under federal law."

In 1991, PacifiCorp filed an application with the federal agency to renew the dam's 50-year operating license. The license was set to expire in 1993.

As part of the relicensing process, an environmental impact statement issued in October 1996 required PacifiCorp to install mechanisms for fish passage for migratory salmon and to increase flows. Company officials said the cost for those measures — estimated at between \$30 million and \$50 million — would be too expensive to justify maintaining the dam. PacifiCorp entered settlement talks with local officials, environmental groups and regulators for another solution.

After two years of negotiations, the participants reached an agreement to shut down power generation and remove the dam.

The dam has been operating on annual licenses since 1993.

The Washington Department of Ecology has opened public comment on a supplemental environmental impact statement to consider what effects dam removal might have on the White Salmon River. In particular, the state wants more information on the short-term effect on water quality by releasing sediment and debris that are backed up behind the dam, said Joye Redfield-Wilder, a department spokeswoman.

PacifiCorp has reached agreements to decommission two hydroelectric projects: the American Fork Project in Utah, which produced less than 1 megawatt of power, and the 6-megawatt Powderdale Project on the Hood River in Oregon. The company remains in negotiations on the future of a larger project on the Klamath River in Southern Oregon and Northern California.