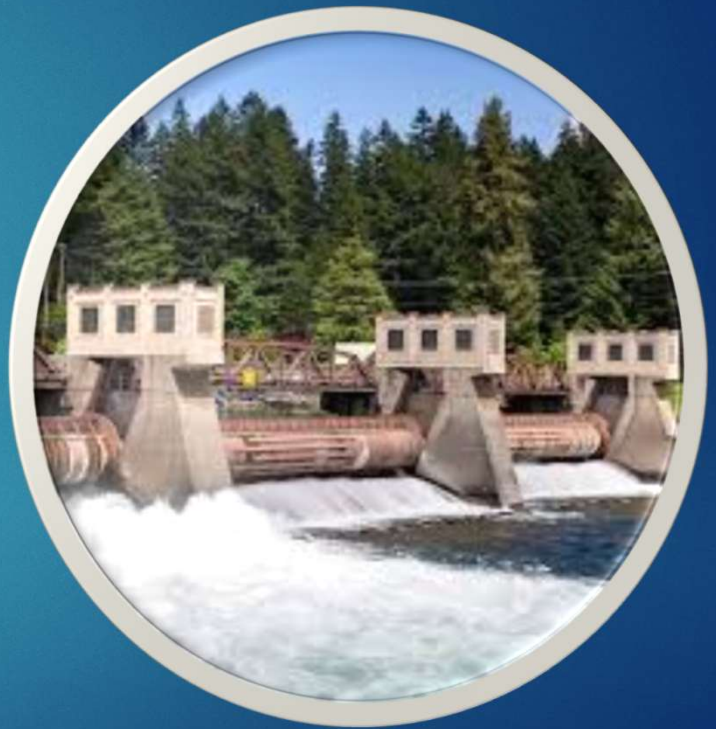
The Impact of Decommissioning Leaburg Dam and Hydroelectric Station

OREGON CITIZENS FOR ENERGY SECURITY

MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

The Complex Impact of EWEB's Decommissioning Decision on the Mckenzie Valley Community

This presentation addresses the numerous questions and concerns on the social, economic, environmental, and agricultural impact generated from Mckenzie Valley residents, business owners and local authorities on EWEB's decision to decommission the Leaburg Dam and hydroelectric plant.



WEB McKenzie Picture source: Valley Customer Appreciation Dinner

Appreciating EWEB's Century of Commitment

Picture source: The Register-Guard

EWEB has provided nearly a century of unwavering service to the McKenzie Valley community. Their dedicated efforts to ensure reliable electricity, even in challenging weather conditions, highlight their significant role in our daily lives. It is important to recognize and express gratitude for their hard work and commitment during this transitional period.

EWEB's Decision to Decommission the Dam Overview

January 2023

EWEB officially announced plans to decommission the Leaburg Dam and hydroelectric plant, signaling a pivotal shift in the region's energy dynamics.

On Going

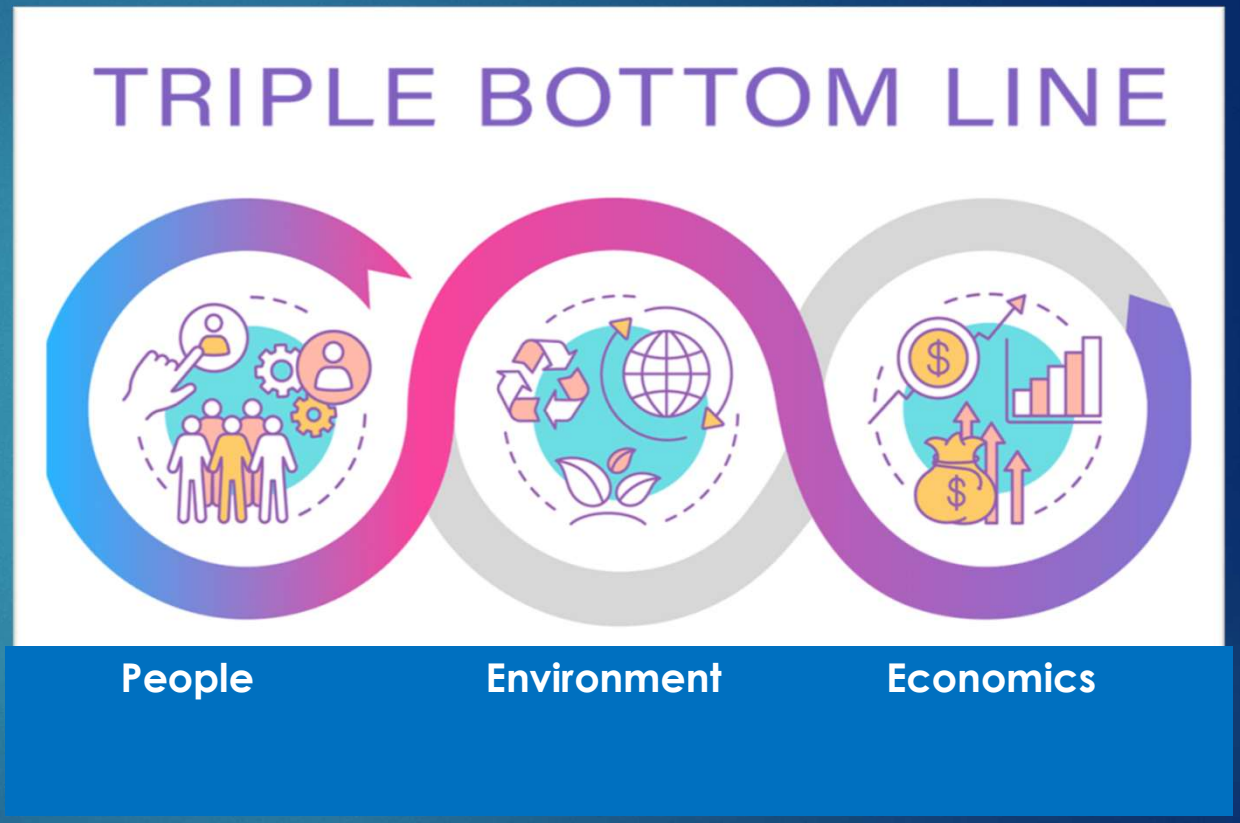
Community discussions are taking place, focusing on the potential economic, environmental, and social impacts of the dam's removal, with voices from various stakeholders being heard.

EWEB's anticipated timeline for the removal of the dam is 2032.

EWEB used a Triple Bottom Line Approach in their decision to decommission the dam and hydrostation.

Each phase and their conclusions can be found on the EWEB site for review and comment.

www.eweb.org



Economic Impact

EWEB's decision will have an economic impact on the Mckenzie Valley community, including potential loss of recreational opportunities and tourism. The removal of the dam may negatively affect local businesses that rely on these activities

Environmental Impact

The environmental issues of decommissioning the dam are significant, including potential changes to water quality, fish habitats, and the restoration of natural waterways. Understanding how the local ecosystem will respond post-decommissioning is an ongoing concern.

Picture source: Travel Oregon

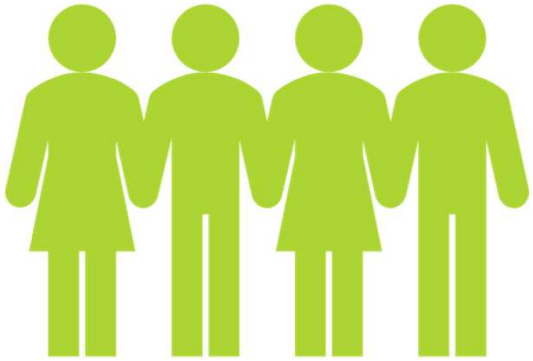
Social Impact

Social impacts include community concerns regarding property values, local livelihoods, and overall quality of life in the McKenzie Valley. EWEB aims to address these concerns through stakeholder engagement and transparency in the decision-making process.

Picture source: Vidacommunitycenter.com

Understanding the Potential Impact of Decommissioning Leaburg Dam on the Community

- Oregon Citizens for Energy Security members reached out to local individuals, businesses and special interest groups to gather comments and concerns about the decommissioning of the dam.
- We found group members had varying opinions, all of them equally valid.
- Therefore, recognizing the diverse perspectives and concerns within the various groups, we are reporting individual concerns rather than by groups.



Three goals of meeting with various community members and groups were to:

Gain Community Perspectives

To understand the diverse perspectives within the community about the dam's decommissioning, highlighting individual voices rather than group opinions.

Listen to Voices

To ensure all voices are heard, contributing to a clearer understanding of the potential impact on the McKenzie Valley community.

Categorize Concerns

Communicate community concerns in several key areas, including resident concerns, local economics, agriculture, fishing, and administrative issues to various agencies involved with the future of our Mckenzie Valley community,

Uncertain EWEB's Impact on Community

The decision to decommission the Leaburg Dam has generated diverse opinions within the Mckenzie Valley community. Stakeholders' express concerns about potential economic repercussions, including the loss of recreational opportunities and tourism, alongside fears of decreased property values and local agricultural impacts.

Conversely, some stakeholders believe that this change could lead to environmental benefits and a shift toward sustainable practices. We will delve into these varying perspectives to help EWEB to understand community concerns regarding the decision.

Questions and Concerns voiced by Mckenzie Valley Residents

Property Values

- Many residents fear a decline in property values, especially for those living near the lake, which could result from the dam's removal and its effects on the local environment.

Water Supply Issues

- Water supply concerns have been raised, particularly regarding the costs associated with redrilling domestic wells and the potential for reduced irrigation capacity for local farms.

Decline in Tourism

- The potential decline in tourism is a major concern among residents, as Leaburg Lake is a key attraction for visitors in the McKenzie Valley.

- With fewer tourists, local businesses, particularly those reliant on the tourism sector, could face economic hardships, leading to job losses and reduced community revenue.

- The removal of the Leaburg Dam will lead to a significant decline in recreational opportunities. Activities such as fishing, boating, and hiking that attract both locals and tourists will impact the larger community's overall lifestyle and enjoyment of the natural environment.
- The Fish Hatchery and the Mckenzie River Discovery Center are two valuable resources to tourism.

Issues Related to Ingress /Egress

Access both during and following the decommission are a major concern to families living on Leaburg Dam Rd, White Water Ranch, and the Fish Hatchery.

Emergency medical, fire, and rescue services both during and after decommission is a major concern.

Agricultural Concerns of Farmers

Loss of Vital Water Sources

- Farmers are worried about the loss of vital water sources due to the draining of the canal. Previous natural watercourses of streams, creeks, and tributaries were disrupted when the canals were built. The restoration of these water sources is essential for agricultural viability.

Water and Irrigation Concerns

Agricultural stakeholders are worried about water access following the decommissioning of the dam. This includes potential loss of vital irrigation sources and the need for restoration of natural watercourses that were altered by the canal's construction. Farmers fear these changes could negatively affect their crop yields and overall agricultural viability.

Restoration of Agriculture Land

THE REMOVAL OF THE DAM MAY IMPACT AGRICULTURAL LAND THAT WAS PREVIOUSLY ALTERED BY THE CANAL'S CONSTRUCTION.

WHAT STUDIES WILL BE DONE TO UNDERSTAND THE SILT, TURBIDITY OR POLLUTANTS, WHICH WOULD RESULT IF THE DAM IS REMOVED?

WHAT IMPACT WOULD THERE BE ON VITAL IRRIGATION WATER FOR SENSITIVE CROPS?

ADDITIONAL CONCERNS ON THE RESTORATION OF AGRICULTURE LAND

Will studies be conducted to determine if heavy metals are residing in the lakebed?

If so, is there a plan to mitigate its effects on plants and crops to avoid human consumption?

Will EWEB pay for analysis testing to assure food safety inspectors that irrigation water is safe post dam removal?

Access to Roads and Logistics

High cube Big Rig access to affected farms is essential at all times to allow for evacuation of livestock and market access for time critical crops.

Log trucks, in significant numbers, will need road use and be able to pass each other.

Access and Logistic Concerns:

Road access and logistic considerations in both the short and long term.

Safety measures should the bridge become blocked by disabled vehicles and ensure large trucks can safely exit the bridge onto a busy highway.

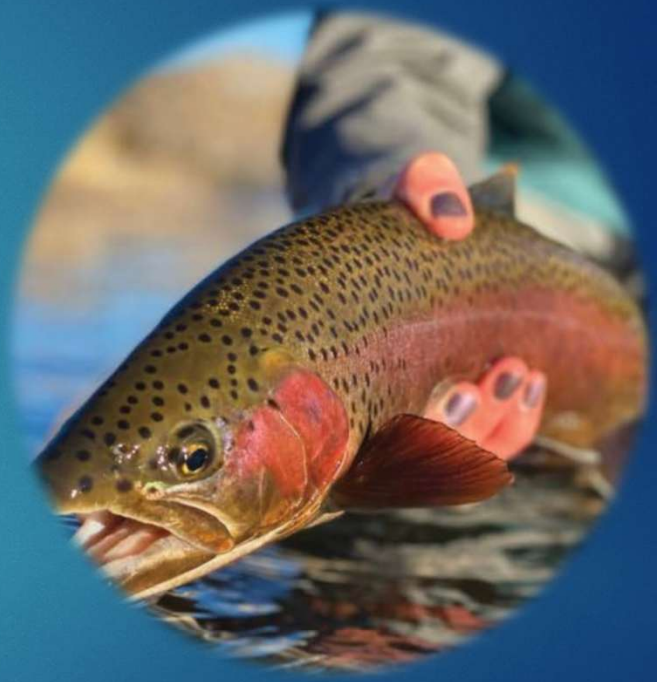
Potential Consequence of Dam Decommission on Local Fish Hatchery/ Fishing Businesses

- Leaburg Dam decommission raises critical questions about the future of fish hatchery programs and the fishing industry in the Mckenzie Valley.

- Concerns include the potential loss of vital fish species supported by the fish hatchery, changes in water availability, and impacts on fishing practices that rely on stable water conditions.

Concerns About Fish Populations

Concerns have been raised about the potential impact of dam removal on local fish populations, especially regarding the Mckenzie Salmon species.



Impact on Fish Hatchery Programs

- Has EWEB considered the effect on hatchery programs that rely on the lake's water supply, which is crucial for sustaining local fish populations and stocking waterways for the local fishing sport businesses?

- Have any studies been conducted to analyze potential impact of the dam removal on fish population without a hatchery program in place?

Additional Administrative Questions raised during OCES discussions with community members:

- Considering the major infrastructure changes planned, coupled with discussions between EWEB and Lane Electric, will local power transmission lines be placed underground or replaced with safer lines? Is this a part of the discussion between the two entities?

- Does FERC require the dam be offered for sale prior to demolition? If so, when would that occur?

- What grant monies might EWEB be eligible for in the event of the dam removal?

Additional Questions Continued: Impact on the Fish Hatchery

- The fish hatchery depends upon the lake water. If the dam is removed is there a plan to replace lake fed water with an intake near Goodpasture bridge?
- What is the projected price of this project?
- Will EWEB be contributing to this?
- Should the dam be sold, what controls are there on release rates and temperatures at the dam?

Administrative Challenges in Infrastructure and Safety Considerations

The decommissioning of the Leaburg Dam and hydroelectric plant poses significant administrative challenges, particularly concerning local infrastructure and safety.

Key considerations include potential changes to power transmission lines, the need for safer, underground installations, and increased fire safety measures in response to heightened wildfire risks.

Ensuring reliable power supply for critical services, especially during emergencies, is paramount to a community who has not fully recovered from the Holiday Farm Fire of 2020 and must now navigates these changes.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's Role

- Hydropower projects owned by non federal entities are regulated under the Federal Power Act (EPA) which is administered by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).
- EWEB has applied to the FERC to surrender their operating license.
- FERC's responsibility is to oversee the surrender of hydropower licensure, approve licensure surrender applications, and ensure the safety and environmental concerns are addressed throughout the process. (www.FERC.gov)
- FERC reviews the environmental impact of dam removal and ensures compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA requirements.

National Environmental Policy Act

- NEPA considers the ecological impacts on aquatic ecosystems, fish spawning and migration, and impacts on native fish populations; changes in sediment patterns; evaluated flood risks and removal of safety hazards (https://ceq.doe.gov)
- Additional information can be found at the following sites:
  - US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): National Management Measures to Control Nonpoint Source Pollution from Hydromodification, Chapter 9: Dam Removal Requirements, Process, and Techniques (www.epa.gov)
  - Corp of Engineers assists and potential funds non-federal dam removal projects through programs such as the Authority for Environmental Remediation and Restoration (AERP)

If you have additional concerns or comments, please feel free to submit them to the Oregon Citizens for Energy Security (OCES) at:

leaburglakeactivitiesLLC@gmail.com