

Olympic National Park News Release

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For Immediate Release

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Contractor Selected for Largest Dam Removal in U.S. History Removal of Two Dams and Restoration of the Olympic Peninsula's Elwha River Will Begin Next Year

PORT ANGELES, Wash. - Barnard Construction Company of Bozeman, Montana has been selected as the contractor to remove the Elwha and Glines Canyon dams on the Olympic Peninsula's Elwha River. The National Park Service's Denver Service Center announced award of the \$26,939,800 contract today. Dam removal will begin approximately 13 months from now, in September 2011.

"This is a historic moment," said Olympic National Park Superintendent Karen Gustin. "With award of this contract, we begin the countdown to the largest dam removal and one of the largest restoration projects in U.S. history."

The contract includes removal of the 108-foot high Elwha Dam, completed in 1913, and the 210-foot high Glines Canyon Dam, completed in 1927, in the nation's largest dam removal to date.

Removing the two dams will allow fish to access spawning habitat in more than 70 miles of river and tributary stream, most of which is protected inside Olympic National Park.

The 45-mile long Elwha River is the historic home of all five species of Pacific salmon and has been legendary as one of the Northwest's most productive salmon streams. Because neither dam provided passage for migratory fish, salmon and other fish have been restricted to the lower five miles of river since dam construction.

"This story is about the fish," explained Frances Charles, Chairwoman of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. "The Tribe looks forward to the return of the Chinook, and the abundance of fish from the stories our ancestors have been telling us about since the dams went up. We used to have salmon and other species out there, and we want them back and revived for our children, and our children's children."

"The award of this contract represents tangible progress toward the

completion of what I believe will be one of the most exciting and biologically-significant initiatives ever launched by the federal government," said U.S. Rep. Norm Dicks, who represents Washington's 6th District which includes the Olympic Peninsula. "The removal of the two dams and the restoration of this unique and largely-protected habitat will demonstrate how these historically-abundant fish runs can recover when we 'turn back the clock.'"

Once underway, the removal process will take up to three years. Dam removal will release large amounts of sediment now impounded in reservoirs behind both dams, so stoppages will be built into the work schedule to limit the amount of sediment released at any given time, particularly when adult fish are in the river.

"Now that we know who the contractor is, we can begin discussions about how much public access can be provided during dam removal," remarked Gustin. "Our primary objective is safe removal of the two dams, but as much as possible, we would like to provide opportunities for people to safely visit the area and see this project for themselves."

A number of preparatory projects have already been completed, or are underway now. Facilities to protect the Port Angeles drinking and industrial water supplies were completed early this year. Improvements to flood protection levees are underway and a fish hatchery on the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe's Reservation is now under construction to replace the tribe's existing hatchery. The new hatchery will help maintain existing stocks of Elwha River fish during dam removal and produce populations of coho, pink, and chum salmon and steelhead vital to restoration.

"As we have been appropriating funds for this project over many years, I have been encouraged that it received the consistent support of four administrations from both parties," said Dicks, who has served for his entire career on the House Subcommittee on Interior and the Environment which funds the National Park Service. He said another \$20 million was included in the appropriations bill that the Interior subcommittee approved in late-July for the next fiscal year.

"There have been many Klallam people, including previous Tribal councils, who have worked hard toward reaching the milestone of removing the Elwha dams," said Charles. "The Tribe's actions toward dam removal are only following in the footsteps of our ancestors and former Tribal leaders requests' and have included many trips to Washington D.C. The Tribe takes

pride in the protection of our environment in honor of our ancestors, Elders, and future generations."

The Elwha River Restoration project is possible through the support and participation of many partners, including the Bureau of Reclamation which was the lead agency in designing dam removal and sediment management strategies and currently operates and maintains the dams.

This landmark project includes:

Removing Elwha & Glines Canyon Dams

The largest dam removal in U.S. history will free the Elwha River after 100 years. Salmon populations will swell from 3,000 to more than 300,000 as all five species of Pacific salmon return to more than 70 miles of river and stream.

Renewing a Culture

The returning salmon and restored river will renew the culture of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, who have lived along the Elwha River since time immemorial. Tribal members will have access to sacred sites now inundated and cultural traditions can be reborn. The NPS and the Tribe are primary partners on this project.

Restoring an Ecosystem

This project creates a living laboratory where people can watch and learn what happens when salmon return after a century to a still wild and protected ecosystem. The return of fish will bring bear, eagles, and other animals back to an ecosystem that has been deprived of this food source for a century.

Economic Benefits

Just as the dams played a vital role in the history and development of the area, removing them will create new opportunities for growth and regional vitality.

Restoring the Coast

Removing the dams will reestablish the natural flow of sediment from the mountains to the coast- rebuilding wetlands, beaches and the estuary at the river's mouth.

More information about Elwha River Restoration is available at the Olympic National Park website <http://www.nps.gov/olym> or at the Elwha River Restoration Facebook page.

Information about the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe can be found at <http://www.elwhainfo.org/people-and-communities/lower-elwha-klallam-tribe>

or the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe Facebook page.

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