

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Bear River dam and hydropower project slated for removal**

Pocatello – Idaho Rivers United and other members of the Bear River Environmental Coordination Committee (ECC) signed an agreement today seeking removal of the Cove Dam and Hydropower Project, located on the Bear River in southeastern Idaho.

The dam removal pact must now be reviewed and approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, the agency that grants operating licenses to privately owned hydropower dams.

The Cove Project was identified during the 2003 relicensing of three dams on the Bear as a high cost/low value project that warranted further study to determine if decommissioning was a feasible alternative to continued operation. Studies undertaken since the relicensing showed that decommissioning Cove would:

- Benefit ratepayers as the cost to repair and operate project would exceed market rates of power generated there.
- Increase generation at the Grace Hydropower Plant, located directly upstream of the Cove Plant.
- Enhance the aquatic resources in the Bear River and assist in the restoration of native cutthroat trout.
- Have no affect on the ability of PacifiCorp to deliver irrigation water through the Bear River/Bear Lake irrigation system.

The Cove Dam is concrete structure 26-feet high and 141-feet long. Its removal will reconnect 29.3 miles of Bear, improving fish habitat and water quality, and reconnect important tributary streams to the main stem river.

"This is a great example of moving past the emotional debate over dam removal and making sound decisions based on economics and science," said Bill Sedivy, Executive Director of Idaho Rivers United.

"Not all dams are created equal," Sedivy added. "When they outlive their usefulness, or cause more harm and damage to the environment than they return in benefits to society, they ought to come down."

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Over the last decade, dam removal has become mainstream. Since the historic, 1999 removal of Edwards Dam on the Kennebec River in Maine, 170 dams have been removed across the U.S. and dozens more removals are scheduled.

“Dams can do a lot of damage to the environment,” Sedivy said. “They block fish passage, drown upstream habitat and alter downstream habitat, raise water temperatures and impair water quality generally. It makes good sense – ecologically and economically – to take down obsolete dams.”

Restoration of the river corridor and removal of the Cove Project, which consists of the dam, a water flume that needs extensive repairs and a powerhouse, is expected to cost in excess of \$2 million. The project will be funded in part by an ECC agreement that will allow greater power generation at the upstream Grace Dam. PacificCorp, owner of the facility, will pick up any additional costs.

The utility would like to begin deconstruction in the spring of 2006 and complete the project by fall, 2006.

The Bear River ECC is comprised of Idaho Rivers United, PacifiCorp, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Idaho Parks and Recreation, Idaho Council of Trout Unlimited, Greater Yellowstone Coalition and American Whitewater.