Today's San Francisco Chronicle has encouraging news for the Klamath River. In this front-page story, Peter Fimrite reports that a final agreement has been reached "among 28 parties, including American Indian tribes, farmers, fishermen and [PacifiCorp,] the hydroelectric company that operates the dams," subject to formal ratification by their various boards, commissions, and councils. A Department of Interior news release says that the agreement will be made available for public review as well, but as of this morning it was not yet on the Department's web site.

This agreement is an important step toward dam removal but, as Interior Secretary Salazar points out in the news release, the work is not yet done. At best, actual dam removal will not begin until 2020. Even that is not yet assured. This is still a complex process with a large number of moving parts, including a comprehensive restoration agreement (draft here) that has yet to be finalized and includes contentious measures on providing water assurances to farmers. Nonetheless, just as roadblocks on one front in this process can obstruct progress on other fronts, this step forward on the dams may provide a boost to negotiators working on the restoration agreement.

There's been more than enough bad news for Pacific salmon this year, including unusually dry conditions on the Scott and Shasta Rivers, key tributaries of the Klamath, for the returning fall-run Chinook. It's nice to have some good news, even if though any on-the-stream results remain tentative and long-term.