



May 7, 2021

The Honorable Doug LaMalfa
The Honorable Cliff Bentz
The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Jeff Merkley
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Alex Padilla
The Honorable Brian Dahle
The Honorable Megan Dahle
The Honorable E. Werner Reschke
The Honorable Dennis Linthicum

RE: 2021 Klamath Project Irrigation Season

Dear Congressmen and Senators:

As you are aware, Klamath Project irrigators are at the beginning of a disastrous water year where the Bureau of Reclamation has announced 33,000 acre-feet of available irrigation supply from Upper Klamath Lake, less than 10% of needed project deliveries. In recent weeks, based on deteriorating hydrology, even this projected amount now appears to be optimistic. This means that hundreds of family farms will not be able to produce the crops and livestock that have not only been the hallmark of the Klamath Basin, but that also provide food and fiber throughout the world. In addition, and just as importantly, thousands of farm and ranch workers will be left without employment, and businesses that rely on active farming and ranching will experience a profound decrease in business. Sadly, our National Wildlife Refuges will also suffer, which will have far-ranging implications up and down the Pacific Flyway.

In order to assist irrigators through this season so that they may be able to continue their operations into the future, we request a minimum of \$45 million for funding programs of the Klamath Project Drought Response Agency (DRA). At this time there is \$15 million available, for funding programs, leaving a shortfall of \$30 million. We urge you to continue to work together with your colleagues and with the Administration to identify and/or earmark additional funding for farmers and ranchers in the Klamath Project.

We are also concerned about the fractured conditions in the basin. Our three counties have sent elected County Commissioners and Supervisors to countless meetings and participated in processes intended to spur collaboration on the solution scale that is needed for our watershed. In fact, each of our counties have contributed funds for professional facilitation in support of these activities. We had hoped that forums of this type could at least produce consensus-based communications as to the best uses of federal dollars to promote a more stable future for Basin resources and communities. That hope has diminished, and we fear that the severe crisis some of our communities' face has been exploited by outside interests and employed as a means of requesting

pet projects that lack consensus, particularly within our own counties. We would welcome the power of your offices in channeling parties toward constructive prioritization of real needs. With that said, we are aware that tribal and non-tribal fishing communities have identified a need for disaster relief. Recognizing the many arguments about the causes of depleted fisheries, we support all efforts to pursue financial assistance for those resource-dependent communities for injury they may experience.

We ask that you work together to help unify our agricultural communities. The current situation can easily and unintentionally lead to individual interests seeking to desperately utilize every drop of water and/or attempting to secure every limited dollar of available funding. We know from past experience – namely, the disastrous 2001 curtailment of Klamath Project water – that this will surely contribute to competition between neighbors and splintering of our rural communities. The devastating 2001 water curtailment provided some other lessons we should heed. Outside interests – from both sides of the political spectrum – will attempt to use this crisis to advance their own particular agendas, quite possibly to the detriment of our communities. We urge that you continue to work with us to ensure that these outside interests do not detract from real, meaningful solutions that can only come from those at the local level who truly understand the critical issues facing our counties this year.

Irrigators will rightly be focused on protecting their livelihoods and businesses. Your leadership is critical during this time and can help fill the inevitable void that will soon emerge. We know that continuing the legacy of family farms and ranches is a top priority for you all. We stand ready to offer any assistance in support of your efforts to secure needed funding and promote unity in our communities as we all navigate our way through this devastating water year.

Sincerely,

Ray A. Haupt, Chair
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

Brandon Criss, District 1
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

Ed Valenzuela, District 2
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

Michael N. Kobseff, District 3
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

Nancy Ogren, District 4
Siskiyou County Board of Supervisors

Ned Coe, Chair
Modoc County Board of Supervisors

Patricia Cullins, District II
Modoc County Board of Supervisors

Elizabeth Cavasso, District IV
Modoc County Board of Supervisors

Geri Byrne, District V
Modoc County Board of Supervisors

Derrick DeGroot, Vice-Chair
Klamath County Commissioners

Donnie Boyd, Commissioner
Klamath County Commissioners

cc: Secretary Deb Haaland, Department of Interior