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**FAILED FEDERAL WATER POLICY WILL SHUT DOWN KLAMATH BASIN
FOOD PRODUCTION FOR THE SECOND CONSECUTIVE YEAR**

The federal government announced today that it will deprive highly fertile farms and ranches in the Klamath Basin of irrigation water necessary to produce food this year. The decision comes at a time of global food security fears, rapidly rising food prices, and concerns that grocery store shelves may become empty this year.

Klamath Water Users Association (KWUA), which represents irrigation water users who produce food based on once-reliable irrigation water supplies from Upper Klamath Lake, Oregon's largest surface water body, decried today's announcement.

"We have 170,000 acres that could be irrigated this year and we're ready to get to work," said KWUA President Ben DuVal, who farms with his wife and daughters on land served by the Project. "On a single acre, we can produce over 50,000 pounds of potatoes, or six thousand pounds of wheat. This year, most of that land will not produce any food because the government is denying water for irrigation. We'll just be trying to keep the weeds and dust under control."

KWUA leaders said that there is adequate water available this year to provide irrigation from Upper Klamath Lake to the Klamath Project, a system of infrastructure that was built to deliver water to a community of family farms straddling the California-Oregon border. The Project provides water to some of the richest soils in the world. But federal regulators intend to deny irrigation water needed to produce food, at a time when the country and world most need it.

Rigid operating guidelines mandated by federal regulatory agencies mean that the Project's family farms and ranches will have an uncertain amount of water, probably less than 15 percent of what they need, although producers will not finally know how much water they will have until it is far too late to plan their operations.

This federal policy comes on the heels of the federal government's 2021 approach, when the government afforded zero water through Project facilities for irrigation for the first time in the 118-year history of the Project. The announced 2022 supply is the second-worst ever.

In today's announcement of a 2022 Klamath Project Operations Plan, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation directed that water that could be used for irrigation or wildlife benefits will instead be used to artificially augment flows 40 miles downstream in the Klamath River, and to maintain specified elevations of water in Upper Klamath Lake.

In each case, the water will be dedicated to fish species based on regulatory commands of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). NMFS has authority related to coho salmon, considered a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), and USFWS has authority related to Lost River suckers and shortnose suckers, both of which are listed as endangered under the ESA.

The federal agencies' experiment of increasing water allocation to these ESA-listed species has been tried for 25 years in the Klamath Basin, yet there is no evidence this policy has benefitted the target fish populations.

"If we farmers failed as badly as the federal agency biologists who are controlling water policy, our bankers would have foreclosed on us 20 years ago," said Mr. DuVal. "The regulators' performance is unacceptable and should be embarrassing to federal decision-makers."

KWUA Executive Director Paul Simmons said that NMFS's requirements are egregious and out of balance. "Between now and the end of irrigation season, there will be about 210,000 acre-feet of inflow to Upper Klamath Lake," he said. "But NMFS is telling Reclamation to release over 400,000 acre-feet of water down the Klamath River."

To furnish that much water requires artificial supplementation of natural flow by releasing water that was stored behind a dam at the outlet of Upper Klamath Lake during the non-irrigation season.

KWUA leaders insist that NMFS's regulatory demands are neither fair nor effective.

"It's the world's worst-kept secret that NMFS is using Klamath Project water to try to mitigate problems not caused by the Klamath Project," said Mr. Simmons. "And when that doesn't work, they just do it again, and then again."

Although food producers in the Klamath Project are hamstrung, by regulatory demands, they share the concern that Pacific salmon stocks are struggling. "That's bad for fishing communities and it's bad for all of us," said Mr. DuVal. A combination of many factors has affected fish populations, including a history of overfishing, sea lion predation, and ocean conditions. "I understand that it's hard to regulate ocean conditions," said Mr. DuVal. "But harming my family and destroying my community doesn't fix ocean conditions and it doesn't save fish."

Project water shortage will also be exacerbated by USFWS's stringent requirements for Reclamation to withhold water from the Project to maintain specified depths of water in Upper Klamath Lake. There is no evidence that regulation of irrigation supplies has yielded any benefit to sucker populations in Upper Klamath Lake.

Federal water policies' negative impacts on food production comes at a time of global food security concerns, soaring prices at the grocery store, and fears of empty shelves. Klamath Basin farmers and ranchers are bracing for dust storms and resulting poor air quality and other local environmental impacts that predictably arise when once-reliable surface water supplies are directed elsewhere by federal agencies.

In addition, in 2022, for the first time ever, two federal national wildlife refuges will go dry because water will be redirected to a few ESA-listed species. Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge both depend on water diverted and delivered by irrigation districts. Those critically important features of the Pacific Flyway for waterfowl are disabled.

“Under the current application of the ESA in the Klamath there are no winners,” former KWUA President Tricia Hill said in testimony before a congressional committee last month. “Only losers. And I cannot convey how heartbreaking it is to watch our basin—from its people to its environment to its wildlife—crumble around me.”

Reclamation also announced today that there will be \$20 million available to help mitigate economic damage to farms that do not use irrigation water this year. While KWUA expressed its gratitude to its congressional delegation and the Commissioner of Reclamation for that funding, local irrigators lament that dollars cannot replace the loss of food production, jobs, and community stability directly caused by unbalanced federal water management policies.

Klamath Irrigation District President and KWUA board member Ty Kliever said that his family and his neighbors cannot live through a repeat of last year. “Government mismanagement is causing this situation, period. Many of my fellow producers liquidated entirely last year, and I don't know who will make it through this year. If the government doesn't restore balance to water policy immediately, it will have wiped out this community of food producers, for nothing.”

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KWUA is a non-profit organization formed in 1953, whose members are irrigation districts and similar water delivery agencies that are party to contracts with the Bureau of Reclamation related to the diversion and delivery of irrigation water in the Klamath Project. For more information, go to www.kwua.org.