

WATER WIRE

An electronic communication from the **California Farm Water Coalition**
717 K Street, Suite 417 — Sacramento, CA 95814 • (916) 441-7723

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www.farmwater.org
mhenry@farmwater.org

Sept. 7-9, 2005

Delta visit begins Farm Water Tour

A three-day tour of farm water use in the San Joaquin Valley will begin with a look at the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, through which much of the water delivered to valley farms and Southern California cities must pass.

Conducted by the California Farm Water Coalition, the tour begins Wednesday, Sept. 7, in Sacramento and spends the first morning traversing the Delta and visiting the federal Tracy Pumping Plant and fish screens.

"We're fortunate to have consulting engineer Dr. B.J. Miller as our presenter during the first part of our tour," said Mike Wade, Coalition executive director. "B.J.'s views on California water are widely sought-after and respected.

"Each year we like to begin the tour with a topic that is of timely interest to our participants. This year the Delta has become center stage for discussions on the flow of water from the north to the south."

Following the first-morning stops in the Delta the tour continues to San Luis Reservoir and an overnight stay in Santa Nella. The first day's agenda concludes with a bbq dinner hosted by the San Luis and Delta Mendota Au-



A visit to the Delta fish screens near Tracy provides an up-close look at efforts to protect area fish.

The tour travels across the San Joaquin Valley from the west to the east during the second day with a visit to Friant Dam and lunch with representatives from Friant Water Users. A visit to Lake Kaweah in the afternoon allows the participants to learn about new technology in flood control by visiting with Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District officials. The evening concludes with a second bbq dinner with local water officials and farmers.

The final day of the tour begins in Bakersfield with a visit to Kern County Water Agency to learn about water issues affecting farmers in the southernmost portion of the valley. A driving tour of the Kern Water Bank follows and then the group begins its return trip to Sacramento.

The last portion of the tour includes several stops in the Westlands Water District to view efforts to use reclaimed water and a visit to the Mendota Pool.

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***Individuals interested in joining
the tour may contact the Coalition at
(916) 441-7723
or visit www.farmwater.org
to learn more about the tour.***

thority with local farmers and water officials in attendance.

"The evening's setting provides the opportunity for our tour participants to informally discuss issues with those individuals who deal with water on an everyday basis," said Wade.

**Welcome to
River Garden Farms, Knights Landing...
as a new member of the California Farm Water Coalition.**

***Do you have a neighbor who should
be a member?***

Farm Water Leadership Tour...

(Continued from Page 1)

"We add something new to the tour each and year we receive high marks from the participants," Wade added. "Our goal is to provide an educational look at how farm water is used in the San Joaquin Valley and the issues that surround that water."

Wade explained that a 40-passenger tour bus is used for the trip but the number of participants is restricted to provide space for individuals.

The cost to individuals joining the tour is only \$435 per person for a single-occupancy room and \$350 per individual for double-occupancy room.



Tour participants (above) receive an in-field briefing on an irrigation system that is electronically controlled from a computer in the irrigation office (left) at Stamoules Farms, Mendota.

Farm Water Leadership Tour Sept. 7-8-9, 2005 San Joaquin Valley

YES, please make the following reservation(s):

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CALIFORNIA FARM WATER COALITION

717 K Street, Suite 417 • Sacramento, CA 95814

(916) 441-7723 — www.farmwater.org — mhenry@farmwater.org

NOTE: You may have read something about the Klamath River in your local newspaper recently. It's that river that begins up in Oregon and then dips down into the far northern reaches of California before winding its way to the Pacific Ocean. It has been at the center of a raging debate over water supplies, salmon and whether farmers should even be receiving water.

A recent editorial in the *Sacramento Bee* got the attention of Dan Keppen who currently serves as executive director of the Family Farm Alliance and previously worked for the Klamath Water Users Association. Dan put together a response to the editorial and then shipped a copy to several folks for their review and further distribution. The information Dan included in his response provides an excellent educational effort on the issues surrounding the Klamath River. It is reprinted in its entirety....it may be lengthy but its information is worth the effort to complete the reading. Dan's comments are printed in bold type within the editorial.

Klamath in crisis —

Sacramento Bee, July 3, 2005

With salmon in abundance, fishing fleet runs aground on shoals of water politics

A healthy stock of salmon is busy swimming out in the Pacific Ocean, but authorities have restricted commercial fishing operations throughout Northern California because of problems in one river.

That would be the Klamath, where an anemic population of salmon return each year to spawn.

Anemic? In 2002 - the year of the big "fish kill" that Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen Associations (PCFFA) and others like to attribute as the reason behind this year's lower Klamath returns - Iron Gate Hatchery on the Klamath River recorded the third highest number of returning salmon in forty years. Yes - 33,000 fish died near the mouth of the river (over 200 miles from the Klamath Project) - but over 100,000 fish survived.

PCFFA and activists have, for the past three years, continued to claim that there is a correlation between 2002 Klamath Project operations and the Klamath River fish die-off in 2002. Judge Armstrong in 2003, based on the conflicting evidence presented by the parties regarding the cause of the fish die-off, found a "triable issue of fact" exists as to whether the Bureau of Reclamation breached its duty to the Yurok Tribes through its operation of the Klamath Project. Accordingly, the court denied the tribes' motions for summary judgment on this matter, and ultimately dismissed the case as "moot" earlier this year. Further, a 2003 report released by the National Academy of Sciences also failed to find a link between the die-off and Project operations. It cannot clearly be shown that low flows killed the salmon that year. Simply look at 1988, when identical flow conditions existed in the Lower Klamath River. That year, a run of 215,322 salmon occurred on the Klamath River ("anemic population"?), and no fish die-off occurred. In 2002, 132,600 salmon returned, and 33,000 died on the lower river. In other words, there was a much larger salmon run in 1988 with the same lower river flow, but no fish die-off.

Salmon return to the river of their birth to end their life cycle, spawning just before they die. Between birth and death, the fish live in the ocean. And while they're in the ocean, the salmon that were born in the Klamath mingle with those that started life elsewhere.



A view of Tule Lake and some of its inhabitants.

There's no way a fisherman knows which is on the hook. A regulator can't tell, either. So to protect the precious few salmon that are bound for the Klamath, the only recourse has been to curtail ocean salmon fishing altogether.

This is not the only recourse available. On June 3rd, two Oregon fishermen's associations and workers and families dependent on the fishing industry filed suit against the National Marine Fisheries Service, arguing that the agency's decision to slash the 2005 commercial trolling chinook salmon fishing season by more than half violated federal law.

Local fishermen, coastal business owners, and other workers, represented by Pacific Legal Foundation (PLF), say that the Fisheries Service ignored the fact that there are record numbers of returning salmon, failed to consider hatchery salmon, and disregarded the severe eco-

conomic and safety impacts of the regulation. The agency's decision threatens families, businesses, and communities dependent on the fishing industry from Portland to San Francisco.

NMFS' decision to virtually eliminate the 2005 season for salmon fisheries off the coasts of Oregon and California is based in large part on the agency's "selective counting" of only naturally spawned chinook salmon, ignoring the record numbers of chinook that exist when hatchery spawned chinook also are counted. PLF says that federal law does not allow NMFS to treat hatchery and naturally spawned salmon differently or to issue harvest regulations based solely on naturally spawned salmon numbers.

When hatchery fish are included, the 2005 forecasts for chinook returns support a large harvest. In fact, the 2005 findings of the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, which recommends fishery management decisions to NMFS for Pacific salmon fisheries, show that the Central Valley Index (a combination of Sacramento River chinook and Central Valley chinook) forecast is the highest on record and twice the 2004 preseason forecast, and that the Klamath River fall chinook forecast is 1.11 times the 2004 preseason forecast.

PLF's lawsuit also charges NMFS with disregarding the economic and safety impacts of its harvest regulation on

commercial chinook salmon fishermen and small businesses dependent on the commercial chinook salmon fishery, as required by federal law. Congress-concerned that conservation measures were threatening the survival of fishing communities-mandated under the Magnuson-Stevens Fisheries Act and the Regulatory Flexibility Act that NMFS must examine the potential economic impacts of regulations on fishing communities, and identify alternatives that minimize those effects.

The decision to limit commercial salmon fishing has these mom-and-pop businesses angry and frustrated, and understandably so. Consumers aren't getting much of a break on salmon prices either. The situation smells of White House politics and misplaced priorities.

Some of us in the Upper Basin who have read The Bee's editorial piece think it smells of a PCFFA or EarthJustice news release. Where did the editorial board get its information to write such a one-sided assessment?

Once one of the West Coast's biggest salmon fisheries, the Klamath begins in Oregon before snaking south to California, then west to the ocean. Along the way, considerable water is taken from the river to sustain thousands of acres of farm land, much of it devoted to potatoes.

1. "Considerable water?" The Klamath Irrigation Project - the sole target of the PCFFA and other environmental activist groups - uses only 3-4% of the total water that flows out of the Klamath into the Pacific on an annual basis. These same activists will counter this fact by claiming that 300,000 acre-feet of the 1.3 million acre-feet that flows by the Klamath Project (located hundreds of miles above the mouth of the river, where the fish died in 2002) is diverted to the Project in an average year.

This is true; what is also true is that, were it not for the storage provided by the Klamath Project, summer and fall river levels below Iron Gate Dam would currently be at "pre-development" levels, which in some cases, was merely a trickle. We have photographic evidence of flows in the Link River immediately below Upper Klamath Lake, taken before the Klamath Project was operable, 100 years ago. These pictures show a DRY Link River in the middle of the summer. That's because the natural reef that preceded Link River Dam periodically kept the lake from spilling into Link River, especially when high winds from the south, in essence, "pushed" the water towards the north end of the lake.

Further, the Bureau of Reclamation is currently wrapping up its "Undepleted Natural Flow of the Upper Klamath River", which will be finalized and submitted to the National Academy of Sciences for peer review this year. That study shows that flows have increased 30 percent over discharges before farmers settled the area. The flow in-



A view of pumps and a delivery canal in the Tule Lake Irrigation District.

creases are attributed to the fact that irrigated land uses less water than evaporation loss from the thousands of acres of swamps and marshes that existed before the shallow lakebeds were reclaimed for agricultural use.

The development of the stored water provided by the Klamath Project allowed for the controlled, beneficial use of water in the Upper Basin. Currently, summer flows in the Lower Klamath River are augmented with stored water that would not be there, but for the Klamath Project.

Under pre-Project conditions, natural controls existed below both Upper Klamath Lake and Lake Ewauna which stabilized lake levels except during critical droughts. Those controls were natural reefs of hard earth material in the channel and other channel constrictions. Under these pre-Project conditions, the Klamath River flowed into the Lower Klamath Lake area. A 1906 map titled "Topographic and Drainage Map, Upper and Lower Klamath Project" shows the invert of the Klamath Strait approximately the same level as the Klamath River channel bottom near Keno. In addition, the Lost River terminated at Tule Lake. These flows flooded approximately 183,000 acres within Lower Klamath and Tule Lake. In general, under pre-Project conditions, Klamath River flows downstream of Keno may have occurred after a certain water level was reached in the Klamath River and Lower Klamath Lake.

So - the stored water that is being used by farmers in the summer time is water that otherwise would have flowed out to sea or evaporated in shallow basins in April, May and June. The environmental activists would have you believe that the Klamath Project is simply sucking water directly out of the river, when in fact, they are pulling off stored reserves in Upper Klamath Lake, Gerber Reservoir, and Clear Lake.

2. "Much of it devoted to potatoes?" - I'm not sure what the point is here. First, "much of it" is NOT devoted to potatoes. The Klamath Irrigation Project supplies water to approximately 200,000 acres. This year, 12,000 acres of potatoes are being produced in the Project. Also, potatoes use only 18-24 inches of water per acre (as compared to 60 inches of water per acre in suburban areas). Further - the federal Klamath Project only represents less than 40 percent of all the Upper Basin irrigated agriculture, according to a study developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. So, the actual amount of potatoes grown in the Upper Basin is less than 3 percent of the total irrigated acreage.



Using a dragline to clear debris and plant growth from a Tule Lake Irrigation District distribution canal.

With that said – I'm not sure what the big deal is about growing potatoes. Interestingly, 7,000 of the 12,000 acres grown in the Klamath Project are fresh market potatoes, most of which are sold to restaurants and markets in San Francisco.

The Klamath simply doesn't have the water to deliver what the farmers desire and leave enough in the river for healthy steelhead and salmon populations.

We hear this argument all the time from activist groups like WaterWatch, EarthJustice and PCFFA. The irrigated acreage served by the Klamath Project has remained essentially the same for nearly 50 years. That particular water demand has remained constant. If there wasn't enough water, how come we haven't seen massive fish kills every year for the past 50 years?

Up and down the river, key tributaries that once sheltered these fish are inhospitable because of excessive groundwater pumping and historic logging practices, among other human alterations.

FYI - a study conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service prior to the list of coho salmon listed the factors that contributed to the decline of Klamath River salmonids. They were:

- Over fishing
- Logging
- Trinity River transbasin diversion
- Irrigation diversions in lower Klamath tributaries
- 1964 flood
- 1976-1977 drought
- Sea lion predation
- Brown trout predation.

The documents I have reviewed are notable for their lack of supporting scientific information or data suggesting that Klamath Project operations are a significant factor adversely affecting fishery resources. To the contrary, the available information provides compelling evidence that other factors are far more important in affecting fish populations than the recent historical Iron Gate Dam flow regime.

A similar circumstance occurred with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) during and after the coho salmon listing in the lower basin. It cited the reasons to list coho salmon, excluding Klamath Project operations as a significant factor affecting the species. However, shortly following the listing, and with no supporting data, NMFS chose to center its attention on the Klamath Project as the principal factor affecting coho salmon.

The NAS Klamath review of 2003 provides additional information on this matter, and outlines in particular the impacts caused by the three large canneries that were operated at the mouth of the Klamath River 100 years ago. That report suggests that the decline in salmon runs began at that time.

The Klamath crisis can be wrongly portrayed as a fish-vs.-humans matter. In truth, it's more of a humans-vs.-humans competition, with commercial fishermen and Indian tribes downstream pitted against farmers upstream. The Bush administration has tended to favor upstream interests in Oregon, a state that is more likely to back a Republican for president, over those in California, which favors a Democratic stronghold.

This is an interesting finding. President Bush did not win in Oregon in the past election, or the previous election. In fact, there are parts of the Willamette Valley that rival San Francisco as Democratic strongholds. On the other hand, California has a Republican governor, which Oregon has not seen since Vic Atiyeh was re-elected in 1982: over 20 years ago. This finding also fails to reflect that a good portion of the Klamath Project is in Northern California. Further, additional farming and ranching occurs in the Scott and Shasta Valleys of California. This statement is very similar to the black helicopter arguments we've been seeing from PCFFA, EarthJustice, and other activist groups, who desperately try to link anything that goes bad in Klamath with Bush Administration policy. Of course, this is a good ploy to use when trying to generate funding from potential donors. To see this kind of reasoning replayed in The Bee, however, is disappointing.

A more balanced management policy would focus on restoring the salmon fishery, because it is the most high-value crop that the Klamath's water sustains.

Where in the world did the Bee come up with this finding? Just prior to the 2002 fish die-off, native Americans along the Klamath River were trying to peddle salmon on coastal roadsides at a fraction of market prices, due to the glut of West Coast salmon. The Modesto Bee in 2002 carried a story on this very issue. I would be very interested in seeing the data that backs this statement, and would be happy to provide The Bee with information that may contribute to a more balanced decision on this matter.

But the situation along the Klamath is anything but balanced. It is a mess. And now so is the entire salmon season for commercial fishermen off the coast. So many fish, so little fishing, so little regard for common-sense water policies.

I am truly amazed and saddened that The Bee editorial board appears to have chosen to swallow the hook thrown out by Glen Spain and the other spin-masters at PCFFA. The Bee - like PCFFA - has chosen to focus specifically on one small area of a 10.5 million acre watershed and heap the blame for all of the problems in the river (and in the West Coast fishing industry, it would seem) on its family farmers and ranchers. This flies in the face of the approach used in another article I read in The Bee last week, which focused on the fishery problems in the Bay-Delta. In that article, great care was taken to explain that the Bay-Delta is incredibly complex, and that it is difficult to isolate just one factor (such as export pumping) and concluded that is the sole stressor to Delta fish.

If the Bee editorial board had taken the time to talk to Upper Basin water users, Bureau of Reclamation officials, or the State of Oregon, they would have been directed to piles of studies - including two completed by the National Academy of Sciences - which clearly demonstrate that the problems of the Klamath River cannot be solved solely on the backs of Klamath Project irrigators. Instead, a watershed-wide approach must be implemented to determine the relative stress caused to fish by the factors listed above, and then tackle those stressors with solutions. The Klamath water users are doing their part, as evidenced in part by their recognition by Gov. Kulongoski and the State Department of Agriculture as "leaders in conservation" - two years in a row.

If you want to learn more about what's happening in the Upper Basin, I would be happy to put you in contact with local water users and business leaders who would be more than willing to give you a personal tour.

Thank you for considering my views.

Dan Keppen