



SISKIYOU COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
P.O. BOX 750, YREKA, CA 96097
PHONE 530-842-8005



KLAMATH COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
305 Main Street, Klamath Falls, OR 97601
Phone 541-883-5100 | Fax 541-883-5163

November 21, 2014

The Honorable Ron Wyden
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
313 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: S.2379 – Klamath River Dam Removal

Dear Senators Wyden, Feinstein, Merkley, and Boxer:

The Commissioners of Klamath County, Oregon and the Supervisors of Siskiyou County, California -- the elected officials representing two-thirds of the Klamath River watershed -- strongly oppose Senate Bill 2379. The amended Klamath bill that has passed out of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on November 13 perpetuates reliance on the fatally-flawed proposal removing the lower dams on the Klamath River. The citizens of both Klamath and Siskiyou County are adamantly opposed to this direction.

The Klamath proposals claim to provide benefits for fisheries, ecosystems and agriculture. They have the support of certain tribes, some environmental interests and some irrigators. But the glue that holds this subset of stakeholders together is blatant self-interest. Other Klamath stakeholders, including agricultural water users, municipal utilities, tribes, and property owners downstream and on the major Klamath tributaries, see nothing but negatives in dam removal. The gains to be made by the winners here are achieved by the losers bearing the cost and risk of redirected impacts.

We believe other Senators will be concerned with the legal maneuvering that S.2379 must resort to in order to circumvent the Clean Water Act, the Federal Power Act, and NEPA. We also believe Congress will have a hard time swallowing the blank check of allowing stakeholders to amend their agreements and be backed up by federal law without returning to Congress for any further approvals. There are also extraordinary limits on normal judicial review that are necessary to insulate S.2379 from its substantive shortcomings and procedural shortcuts.

Unlike most other examples of dam removal, it should be emphasized that the current proposal for the Klamath dams does not come close to restoring the Klamath River watershed to its natural state. The basin landscape will remain highly modified by the Bureau of Reclamation providing agricultural water supplies in the Klamath Basin and diverting a large portion of the Trinity River to California's Central Valley. The runs of salmon that currently exist have adapted to this altered system, with the fall-run Chinook replacing the spring-run as the most numerous. Continual record runs of salmon are becoming common. This is possible because of the late-season flows afforded

Senators Wyden, Feinstein, Merkley, and Boxer

November 21, 2014

Page Two


by the existence of both the Klamath Irrigation Project and the Klamath Hydroelectric Project. Indeed, just this past August, water was released from storage for the purpose of flushing out fish disease in the Lower Klamath River, while also being released from the very dams proposed for removal to maintain base fish flows in the Klamath main stem while retaining water in Upper Klamath Lake for agriculture.

We continue to support a number of the "interim measures" that are already being implemented on the Klamath River. There is no reason to delay further testing and refinement in the operation of existing facilities and the implementation of less radical and less risky mitigation measures, many of which have already demonstrated their feasibility and effectiveness. There is still much that can be done to advance the interests of all Klamath stakeholders without allowing the almost-religious fervor for dam removal to override scientific reality, environmental risk and damage, and fiscal responsibility.


If the forged relationships are as cohesive as claimed, a more appropriate stakeholder group can certainly modify the proposed agreements, minus dam removal, into legislation that can gain comprehensive local, States and Federal support. Klamath County and Siskiyou County continue to stand ready to work with all of the interests in the Klamath Basin on a properly directed course of action.

Sincerely,

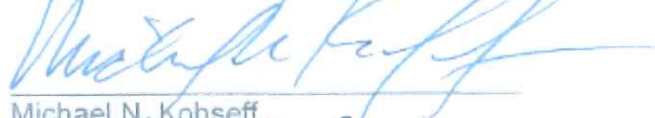
Klamath County
Board of Commissioners



James Bellet, Chairman



Tom Mallams, Vice-Chair


Dennis Linthicum
Commissioner

Siskiyou County
Board of Supervisors


Michael N. Kobseff,
Chairman


Marcia H. Armstrong,
Vice-Chair


Brandon Criss,
Supervisor-District 1


Grace Bennett,
Supervisor-District 4

(absent)

Ed Valenzuela
Supervisor, District 2