

July 3, 2013

Dear Stakeholder:

We are writing to request that you participate in the Klamath Basin task force that is being convened under the leadership of Richard Whitman, Governor Kitzhaber's Natural Resource Advisor. We have been advised by the Department of the Interior that John Bezdek will represent the Secretary. The task force is being convened to resolve the water, power and other resource management issues in the Klamath River Basin (Basin) as listed below. The current crises in the Basin require the immediate attention, leadership, and constructive efforts of us all. Although the Basin has faced many of these challenges for some time, it is clear that now is the time to move for a comprehensive and lasting solution that protects the vast natural resources of the basin, while also providing the stability and certainty needed for the region's economy to continue to thrive.

It is our expectation that the task force will work to address three tasks:

1. Develop a settlement of water management issues in the upper Klamath Basin that results in:
 - At least 30,000 acre feet of increased water inflows into Upper Klamath Lake through a voluntary program to idle water usage;
 - Permanent restoration and protection of significant riparian areas in the Wood, Sprague, and Williamson basins, as well as other tributaries to Upper Klamath Lake, sufficient to produce the water quality and habitat improvements needed for fisheries; and
 - Regulatory assurances for water and land uses in the Upper Basin, both in terms of a negotiated settlement of the exercise of state water rights, and federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Clean Water Act (CWA) compliance.
2. Work to address outstanding power issues for the Klamath Basin Project and the Upper Klamath Basin irrigators:
 - It is crucial that an affordable and certain power supply is attained for both on project and off project irrigators.
3. Work to reduce the Federal Cost:
 - We want the task force to review specific ideas for reducing the costs to the federal government of the overall package of Klamath Basin measures. This will require input from both Upper and Lower Basin participants.

The outcomes we seek are sustainable fisheries and a sustainable level of farming and ranching in the Upper Basin, as well as power rate arrangements needed to maintain the on-project and off-project farming and ranching operations and support the ranching and farming families that are key to the area's economy.

Your task is to work with the Governor's office and the Department of the Interior on resolving these issues and advise us on the specifics of how to get to these resolutions and outcomes, particularly the specifics of any necessary federal legislative and regulatory authorizations, as well as the funding required to implement these activities, along with the time frames that likely are needed to achieve these resolutions and outcomes.

Recognizing both that this is an ambitious charge, and the immediacy of very real water management challenges in this year of extreme drought, we ask that the task force report back to us no later than September 10, 2013. This will require focused, concentrated effort over the next two months, along with the good faith of all participants.

We expect the task force to build on the good work that has already been completed, and the agreements that have been reached by many of the parties involved. Your task is to develop recommendations on the remaining set of issues in the Basin.

We expect all parties to approach this effort ready to compromise. And we recognize that compromises have already been made by many. As noted above, advice from the task force on how to reduce substantially the costs to the federal government of the recommended actions will be an important component of implementing a long-term solution.

The task force will be chaired by Governor Kitzhaber's Natural Resources Advisor, Richard Whitman, who will convene regular meetings. John Bezdek will represent the Secretary of the Interior. Members of our staffs will be actively engaged in this effort and will attend the meetings as appropriate. We will also invite staff of Members of the California delegation who represent the Klamath Basin to attend. We expect that the task force will include, at a minimum, two subgroups: one addressing water management in the Upper Basin, and one addressing on and off-project power rate issues. Any necessary technical assistance will be provided by a technical advisory team made up of (at a minimum) representatives of the two states, the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and NOAA Fisheries, as well as the affected Tribes. In addition, staff for Members of the Oregon congressional delegation stands ready to assist.

When the task force completes its work and reaches consensus, the Members of the Oregon delegation will use the group's recommendations as a basis for developing legislation to authorize those portions of the agreement that require federal legislation. At that time, we will ask that all stakeholders support these legislative efforts.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in these crucial efforts to address the pressing resources management issues in the Klamath River Basin.

Sincerely,

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Greg Walden
U.S. Representative

John A. Kitzhaber, M.D.
Governor