



February 18, 2019

**TO:** Senator Kathleen Taylor, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Natural Resources

Representative Jeff Reardon, Co-Chair, Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Natural Resources

**FROM:** Klamath Water Stakeholders

**SUBJECT: Support for Klamath Basin Water Funding Packages**

Dear Co-Chair Taylor and Co-Chair Reardon and members of the committee:

The undersigned organizations are writing in strong support for funding packages proposed in Governor Kate Brown's recommended budget that will provide welcome advances toward the urgent need for water quality and quantity security in the Klamath Basin.

The Klamath Basin is one of the most ecologically and culturally diverse regions in the world. The Klamath River begins on a high plain that drains into a series of shallow lakes and wetlands, eventually descending over 4,000 feet to the Pacific as it meanders through some of the most rugged mountain ranges in America. Over the last 150 years, fisheries have dramatically declined, leading to hardships for Native American and commercial fishing communities. Ensuing environmental regulations and irrigation curtailments have similarly created hardships for farmers and ranchers, leading many to bankruptcy while ocean fishing closures have impacted communities up and down the Coast.

Despite these challenges, collaboration and local leadership from Tribes, water users, and conservation groups has positioned the Klamath Basin as one of the best candidates for full basin-wide restoration in the world. As the region prepares for removal of four major dams in 2021, and efforts to pursue complementary reclamation goals take shape, the State of Oregon has an important opportunity to help facilitate an effective transition that restores and sustains the ecological and economic well-being of the region. Governor Brown's recommended budget and vision for a secure and resilient water future propose urgent financial resources and staffing to enable this process. The following packages in

particular would provide significant assistance to the Klamath Basin and its diverse water users and ecosystems:

**Klamath Ag Water Quality Monitoring (Oregon Department of Agriculture POP 330)**

Provides \$100,000 General Fund to support ODA's work with partner agencies and landowners to understand and address water quality issues associated with agricultural lands around Klamath Lake. Since 2017, Oregon Department of Agriculture, DEQ, OWEB and local partners have been working with farmers around Klamath Lake to address water quality issues associated with pumping return flows from crop fields into the lake. Phosphorus in this water is of particular concern because it can contribute to algal blooms in the lake. Farmers have been cooperative and share the agencies' goal to better understand the problem in order to develop solutions that will protect water quality while maintaining viable agriculture operations.

**Klamath Basin Water Quality Improvements (Department of Environmental Quality POP 126)**

Provides \$640,000 General Fund, to phase-in 3 positions (2.5 FTE), in support of a coordinated, multi-agency effort to scale up watershed restoration efforts to improve water quality and fish habitat for native species and prepare for the arrival of salmon and steelhead following dam removals planned for 2021.

Conflicts and controversy between irrigators, tribes, and conservation groups over water quantity and quality have persisted for many years. However, we stand at the precipice of a new and better path forward to achieve collaborative solutions that recognize and meet the needs of these diverse stakeholders. By restoring riparian zones along tributaries to Upper Klamath Lake, removing four hydroelectric dams on the mainstem Klamath River, providing irrigation assurances for farmers, and providing economic security for the Klamath Tribes, we can work together to improve the Klamath Basin economy.

State and federal funding to provide water certainty to communities, water users, and fisheries in the Basin is greatly needed. We urge you to support these water funding packages to help supplement and achieve these laudable goals. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Paul Simmons, Interim Director  
**Klamath Water Users Association**

Russell 'Buster' Attebery, Chairman  
**Karuk Tribe**

Glen Spain, Pacific Northwest Director  
**Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations**

Chrysten Lambert,  
Oregon Project Water Director  
**Trout Unlimited**

Greg Block, President  
**Sustainable Northwest**

Molli Myers, President of the Board  
**Klamath Riverkeeper**

Steve Rothert, Regional Director  
**American Rivers**

Regina Chichizola, Executive Director  
**Save California Salmon**