



KLAMATH IRRIGATION DISTRICT

6640 K.I.D. LANE

KLAMATH FALLS, OREGON 97603

Phone: (541) 882-6661 Fax (541) 882-4004

30 March 2023

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Chair Ken Helm,
Vice-Chair Mark Owens,
Vice-Chair Annessa Hartman,
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of HB 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package

Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair Hartman, and Members of the Committee:

Klamath Irrigation District expresses strong support for House Bill 3124, the Bipartisan Drought Relief and Water Security Package proposed by Representative Helm and Representative Owens. I particularly want to highlight the importance of provisions that provide match funding for irrigation districts to unlock federal dollars for irrigation modernization projects and help districts like ours be more resilient to drought and water scarcity.

Klamath Irrigation District is a special government district operated under Oregon Revised Statute 545. The district is responsible for operating and maintaining over 400 miles of earthen embankments in Klamath and Modoc Counties which support the foundation of our economy. Klamath Irrigation District operates and maintains infrastructure which provides water to over 122,000 acres of some of the most productive land in the world. Much of the infrastructure that the district relies on is over 115 years old, inefficient, and increasingly expensive to annually operate and maintain. The modernization projects that the district is pursuing for the A Canal, the A-3 canal, the D-System and numerous other pieces of aging infrastructure will allow for increased water efficiency, improved water quality, enhanced stream flows, groundwater recharge and more reliable water deliveries to patrons, while reducing conflict over water availability across the watershed.

Klamath County has faced several years of severe droughts, including some of the worst on record, and the detrimental impacts of Klamath are being felt throughout the state and regional economies. Without access to reliable water deliveries, farmers are unable to grow crops and produce the food and fiber that we all rely on which erodes our National Security. Food security is National Security!

Klamath Irrigation District is experiencing significant financial challenges following the 2021 drought which resulted in no irrigation water going into our main canal resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars, nearing \$1 million in repairs across this short 9 miles

of infrastructure above the urban area of Klamath Falls. Other damages from the 2021 drought are still being addressed and costs to simply repair (without modernization) is becoming a challenge when the farmers, who pay 100% of the operations and maintenance costs, are not able to get a crop to market to cover the increased costs of maintenance. Dry years result in higher maintenance costs.

To implement large-scale, multi-benefit projects to modernize irrigation infrastructure and be more resilient to drought, many districts, including ours, have utilized federal programs such as NRCS's Watershed & Flood Prevention Operations or Bureau of Reclamation's WaterSMART for support. These programs play a key role in planning, designing, and implementing projects, but still require some portion of project funding to come from non-federal sources. Our district is committed to modernizing our system, but we require state funding to meet match requirements for implementing identified projects in 2023-2025 and beyond. Bill 3124 contains the match funding districts need to fully utilize and leverage the infrastructure dollars that the federal government has made available.

I urge you to support the important funding components in HB 3124 and ensure that state match funding for irrigation modernization projects remains a part of the final bill. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Gene Souza

District Manager
Klamath Irrigation District
6604 KID Lane,
Klamath Falls, OR 97601
(541) 882-6661
Gene.souza@klamathid.org