



Klamath Basin
Audubon Society

P.O. Box 354
Klamath Falls, OR 97601

Joe Spendolini
Chairman, South Suburban Sanitary District
2201 Laverne Ave.
Klamath Falls, OR 97603

Dear Mr. Spendolini:

On behalf of the Board of the Klamath Basin Audubon Society (KBAS) I would like to thank you for meeting with us via Zoom on April 18 to explain HB 2765, legislation currently under consideration in the Oregon House. As an environmental non-profit KBAS seeks ways to educate our members and the general public on ways to understand and appreciate the issues that affect the Klamath Basin's natural environment. HB 2765 is legislation that has direct benefits to one of the most important ecosystems in the Basin, Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge.

Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge (LKNWR), established in 1908 by President Theodore Roosevelt as the nation's first waterfowl refuge, is a critical stopover on the Pacific Flyway for millions of birds, primarily waterfowl, in their spring and fall migrations. But in recent years drought and project water allocations that don't include the twin refuges of Tule Lake and LKNWR have reduced both to virtual deserts. While avian botulism exists in the soil, it flourishes only in low water conditions when the birds are concentrated in a relatively small area. When those conditions occurred in 2020, a tragic outbreak of the disease killed more than 30,000 birds. Since 2020 numerous organizations have brought this situation to the nation's attention and have tried several strategies to bring water to the refuges. Our chapter has worked with National Audubon, Portland Audubon, and California Audubon to inform policy makers of the scope of the problem. California Waterfowl Association purchased water rights from a rancher in the upper Basin to provide some water to LKNWR. While it wasn't sufficient for the needs of the refuge, it did provide an example of a strategy that could work on a larger scale. While the water needs of the refuges can only be permanently met by legislative changes in water policy and allocations, passage of HB 2765 would provide another a viable source of water for LKNWR.

In your detailed presentation on April 18 you explained how water is treated by the South Suburban Sanitary District to meet DEQ requirements and then released into the Klamath River. New plant upgrades are now required to meet more stringent water quality standards. HB 2765 and its proposed amendment would allow at least 25% of the discharged water to be diverted downstream and sent to LKNW. Scott White, the manager of the Klamath Drainage District, explained how existing infrastructure could be used to affect the transfer.

The board of KBAS enthusiastically supports HB 2765 as a vehicle to provide needed water for LKNWR, and we appreciate your willingness to meet with us to explain the pending legislation. Please keep us informed on any further legislative developments.

Sincerely,

Darrel Samuels, President
Klamath Basin Audubon Society