

# United States Senate

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## Senate Supplemental Spending Bill Includes \$10 Million for Klamath Drought Relief

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Oregon Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden successfully amended a Senate emergency spending bill to include \$10 million in drought relief for farmers and ranchers in the Klamath Basin. In an unusual move, Representative Greg Walden came over to the Senate side of the Capitol to join Merkley and Wyden in encouraging members of the Senate to adopt the amendment. The funding will go toward a land idling program that will provide relief to farmers who will not receive Klamath Project irrigation water this growing season.

“Farmers and their families in the Klamath Basin have been hit terribly hard by this drought and relief can’t come quickly enough,” said Merkley. “The farmers have stepped up to the plate to help each other, and I’m grateful the Senate is ready and willing to show them our full support. This additional funding for the land idling programs will help our farmers get through this tough season.”

“This additional funding won’t make the drought disappear, but it will help farmers in the Klamath Basin meet their equipment payments and pay their bills,” said Sen. Ron Wyden. “The Basin is facing an economically devastating situation and I appreciate the Senate coming together today to help our Klamath farm families weather this crisis.”

“I want to thank Sen. Merkley and Sen. Wyden for their leadership and support as we continue to work to deliver assistance to the farmers and ranchers in Klamath basin,” Rep. Walden said. “It’s another example of the delegation coming together in a bipartisan way to help Oregonians dealing with an emergency situation.”

Earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Agriculture declared the Klamath Basin a federal disaster area. The Upper Klamath Lake, which provides most of the water to irrigators in the region, had only one-third of normal water levels this year – leaving over 1,400 farmers and ranchers without the needed resources to irrigate their crops.

The land idling program alleviates the worst effects of water shortages and extreme drought conditions. Through a competitive bidding process, Klamath farmers and ranchers entered into agreements to irrigate only some or none of their land for the 2010 season in exchange for drought aid. These additional funds will support those farmers who would otherwise face financial demise because they were required to plant crops, only to see them fail due to a lack of water.

The additional funding would supplement \$8.75 million that the federal government has previously made available for the operation of drought wells and for land idling.

The final bill still needs to pass the full Senate and be reconciled with the House of Representatives before becoming law.

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