

Walden pushes Klamath aid plan

March 22, 2010



Greg Walden urges prompt drought declaration, assistance, and public workshops to explain aid options in Klamath Basin

[Congressman Greg Walden,](#)

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In anticipation of the Bureau of Reclamation's announcement today of their plans to provide water to irrigators in the Klamath Basin during this drought disaster, Rep. Greg Walden (R-Ore.) today asked the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior for a federal drought declaration and the agencies' assistance in launching a public information campaign to give guidance to farmers, ranchers, and members of the business community who will be impacted by the federal government's ruling.

"I have worked extensively on water and related issues in the Klamath Basin for many years. And I recall well the Bucket Brigade with thousands of hard-working basin residents during the 2001 water shut-off and the tremendous strain it placed on scores of families and businesses. I assure you the preparation and clarity I request here are key to the chances of successfully managing the extremely challenging drought reality in the basin. I stand ready to assist," Rep. Greg Walden said.

"I am asking the agencies to pull the resources together to hold well-publicized public workshops and informational sessions where their experts can advise those in the community about what they need to do to receive the aid they are entitled to under this drought declaration," Rep. Greg Walden said. "My office will help coordinate meeting locations and invitations to the various agriculture and livestock groups to ensure that producers in the basin have an opportunity to learn firsthand about disaster assistance that's available to them," Rep. Greg Walden said.

"I am committed to ensuring that producers have the best, most timely information available," Rep. Greg Walden said.

Rep. Greg Walden sent the following letter today.

March 18, 2010

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretaries Vilsack and Salazar,

I am writing to urge you to swiftly issue a federal drought declaration for the Klamath Basin in Oregon that will allow for emergency funds and aid programs to assist family farmers, ranchers and small businesses dealing with the basin's ongoing drought disaster. I also request that you make experts within your agencies available for public workshops in the basin as soon as possible to provide farmers and ranchers with information regarding what programs may be available to them if and when the federal drought declaration is made.

As you are aware, on March 9, 2010 the Klamath County commissioners requested a state drought declaration for Oregon's Klamath Basin. Acting on that request, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski last night issued a state drought declaration and requested a federal natural disaster determination for the basin. Although the needed federal drought declaration will not provide immediate assistance to the farmers, ranchers and small businesses who will be impacted by what is expected to be the worst drought to hit the area, your assistance in communicating clearly and openly with basin stakeholders at this time is essential and will be appreciated.

I offer the assistance of my district office and staff to help coordinate meeting locations and invitations to the various agriculture and livestock groups to ensure that producers in the basin have an opportunity to learn firsthand about federal disaster relief programs that may be available. In many cases, farmers and ranchers remain unaware of the disaster assistance options available to them and the decisions that must be made in advance to qualify for assistance down the road. I cannot overstate the importance of producers having the best, most timely information available. Your agencies' cooperation in providing and disseminating this information will be critical to the economic well-being of the basin this year. It is also important for your agencies to work in a coordinated fashion, provide easy-to-understand options and be as flexible and inclusive as possible in implementing or executing federal programs under their purview.

I have worked extensively on water and related issues in the Klamath Basin for many years. And I recall well the Bucket Brigade with thousands of hard-working basin residents during the 2001 water shut-off and the tremendous strain it placed on scores of families and businesses. I assure you the preparation and clarity I request here are key to the chances of successfully managing the extremely challenging drought reality in the basin. I stand ready to assist as it is helpful.

I look forward to working with you and your appropriate staff in the state offices to plan these workshops. Please feel free to contact me or your staff can contact Nathan Rea in my Washington, D.C. at (202) 226-5234 or John Snider in my Medford district office at (541) 776-4646. They will be happy to help coordinate this much-needed effort.

Best regards,
Greg Walden
Member of Congress