

Water begins flowing today

Irrigators must wait at least 10 days before requesting deliveries

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Irrigation water will begin flowing from Upper Klamath Lake today, the Bureau of Reclamation announced late Tuesday afternoon.

The water is intended to partially fill Klamath Irrigation District canals and may not be used for irrigation, said district manager Dave Solem. The irrigation district anticipates it will take at least 10 days to charge the canals, but after that, farmers and ranchers may contact their ditch rider to request deliveries, he said.

“This is just water for Klamath Irrigation District to fill the system,” Solem said. “(The water) isn’t available to start irrigating yet. We’ve got to get the system filled up before we start delivering it.”

Upper Klamath Lake is just above the minimum needed to begin diversions, Solem said, and the district is betting on continued inflows to the lake. Delivery in 10 days is dependent on the lake continuing to build, Solem said, and if inflows drop off, deliveries could be stopped.

“It’s a risk we’re willing to take to be prepared,” he said, “but there is a risk involved.”

During a KID board meeting Thursday, Solem will present the district’s plan for water delivery that will move water around as fairly and efficiently as possible, he said.

“The amount in the canals is going to be way, way less than typically available. We’re going to be dividing the amount we’re diverting into canal systems then rotate people around with that amount of water,” he said.

BOR statement

The Bureau of Reclamation said in a news release that releases from the lake will be controlled with the intention of maintaining lake levels according to the 2010 operations plan.

“Reclamation will monitor lake levels closely and continue to work with our irrigation contractors, resource agencies, and Tribal interests,” said Sue Fry, Klamath Project area manager. “Every effort will be made to release available water to the contractors while maintaining our legal and Tribal obligations.”

Solem said the lake levels provide a minimal cushion that allows the district to prepare its canals for water deliveries.

“We understand what the rules are, and the lake has to continue to build up,” Solem said. “It’s a day-by-day check on inflows and lake levels and diversions.”

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