

No water for some

Reclamation: Only 'A' users will get any irrigation water this year

By TY BEAVER
H&N Staff Writer
May 19, 2010

Only irrigators in the Klamath and Tulelake irrigation districts and Van Brimmer Ditch Co. will receive water from the Klamath Reclamation Project this year.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Klamath Basin area office told irrigation districts and individual contractors in a letter Tuesday that Project water would only reach "A" users.

Others such as the Enterprise Irrigation District, known as Warren Act contractors, will receive no water from the Project, leaving its irrigators few, if any, options for irrigating their lands.

"We're going to be completely dry," said Shane McDonald, Enterprise's manager.

Reclamation will provide about 150,000 acre-feet of water to the Project, about a third of its usual excess of 400,000 acre-feet.

Upper Klamath Lake, the Project's chief water source, is at historic lows, and inflows to it and precipitation are below average.

Kevin Moore, spokesman for Reclamation's Klamath Basin office, said about 55,000 acres that receive water from Upper Klamath Lake are "B" contractors. Some of those "B" contractors are receiving assistance from the Klamath Water and Power Agency to idle their land or pump groundwater.

"Reclamation is working with the irrigation districts to examine different options to provide releases to these contractors and will continue to monitor the situation closely," Moore said.

Dave Solem, manager of Klamath Irrigation District, said his 40,000-acre district already plans to idle about 10,000 acres to reduce water use. He expects KID to receive water into its canals at a rate of 375 cubic feet per second.

"It does not break down to very much," he said.

McDonald said Enterprise is entirely dependent on the Project for water and has no other sources.

The 2,000-acre district, which covers the east side of the A Canal from Steen Sports Park to lands near Klamath Community College, provides irrigation water to hundreds of farmers and residential users, watering everything from private orchards and pastures to fields of barley.

McDonald said the sports park has its own well, but others have no other source. He said he would look into the possibility of the district digging its own well.

"I'm going to look to do what we can to be more self-reliant," he said.

Moore said there are several programs available to help irrigators, including the Klamath Water and Power Agency's land idling program, which is available for enrollment until June 1.

Livestock owners can participate in the Emergency Conservation program offered through Klamath County's Farm Service Agency. The program provides assistance in hauling water for livestock and developing livestock watering facilities.

+++++

NOTE: In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. section 107, any copyrighted material herein is distributed without profit or payment to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving this information for non-profit research and educational purposes only. For more information go to:

<http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/17/107.shtml>