

Water Users Association works against ‘rate shock’

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Letter to the Editor
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The Klamath Water Users Association, while officially an organization in place to serve its member districts — all of which are located within the federal Klamath Reclamation Project — ultimately could benefit all Klamath Basin irrigators.

In Edward Bartell’s Sept. 13 commentary, he incorrectly assumed that the association was not in support of the 2005 rate-shock legislation. In fact, the association’s executive director testified in support of this legislation with our state senator.

This legislation was and is important in serving as a tourniquet for rising power rates and we are grateful to those who helped make it happen. However, the legislation only buffers rates over seven years (three more years) at which point, without another plan in place to address irrigators’ power costs, irrigators will face power costs in the range of 10 cents per kilowatt hour for pumping. Without another alternative, Basin agriculture as we know it today will be at risk.

Pacific Power regularly adjusts its power costs through rate cases. Recently there was a rate case filed by Pacific Power seeking a 17.5 percent increase in “schedule 41” rates (irrigation rates). The average increase proposed for all other customer classes was about 8 percent. The Klamath Water Users Association filed as interveners in the case with the goal of significantly reducing or eliminating the proposed increase (which will provide benefit after the rate-shock legislation sunsets).

We sent inquiries to other schedule 41 ratepayers throughout the state, including the Klamath Off-Project Water Users Association, seeking partners to help with this effort. To date, we stand alone as interveners in this rate case, but nonetheless expect to see measurable and significant results.

Our involvement in this rate case doesn’t only benefit Project irrigators; it benefits all schedule 41 ratepayers statewide.

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