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Dear Klamath Project Farmers, Ranchers, and Communities:

As we enter the 2026 irrigation season, and you continue to refine your on-farm plan activities for the year, we want to reach out regarding irrigation water supplies for 2026.

As you are deeply aware, 2026 looks far different than 2025. We are experiencing a snow drought, with the watershed's snowpack sitting at 4% percent of the median as of March 31. This has and will continue to result in inflows to Upper Klamath Lake (UKL), being far below normal.¹ We are also experiencing unseasonably early spring-like conditions. These realities point to a challenging water year ahead.

At the end of February, the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) released its 2026 Annual Operations Plan for the Klamath Project. The Plan did not identify specific quantities for 2026 irrigation water deliveries. Rather, it outlined how water will be managed during the 2026 water year and established the operation framework for irrigation deliveries, Upper Klamath Lake elevations, and Klamath River Flows under the Proposed Action and Biological Opinions that were adopted in 2024.

Given current hydrologic conditions and the meager snowpack, our analysis indicates that water available to Klamath Project irrigators will be less than full delivery or demand. We expect a more specific announcement from Reclamation very soon. We know this is not welcome news. We share your concern and we wish it was different. This will be yet another year when you, your family, and other farmers and ranchers will be required to make tough decisions to ensure the survival, rather than the prosperity, of generational family operations.

Our priority for the 2026 water year is to coordinate closely with Reclamation to maximize deliveries to the greatest extent possible while remaining in compliance with current federal law and policy. At the same time, we are committed to helping you navigate what is ahead with transparent and timely information from KWUA, your districts, and Reclamation.

This year, a Klamath Project Drought Response Agency (DRA) program will be in place. The DRA Board has been working closely with KWUA and Reclamation to secure the resources and funding available for a 2026 program. Our initial assessment is that up to 40,000 acres may need to remain unirrigated in 2026 to ensure water is available for crops in September and October. Additional details, including DRA participation opportunities, will be announced shortly. If you are unsure if you are signed up to receive DRA notifications, please contact (541) 630-0752 or info@klamathwaterbank.com.

While we manage the immediate challenges of the 2026 water year, we are also fully engaged in

¹ When UKL should be filling from snowmelt, it is flatlining as we approach the irrigation season. UKL surface elevation for March 24 through March 30 has ranged between 4142.52 and 4142.53.

bringing about meaningful change in the way that the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is applied to the Klamath Project. Driven by legal developments and legislation, in early 2026, Reclamation completed a reassessment of how the ESA applies to the Klamath Project. This has set the stage for a significantly improved approach to ESA compliance, an approach that is consistent with the process applied in other areas.

Now that this step is complete, Reclamation has initiated an ESA reconsultation, which is expected to be completed ahead of the 2027 irrigation season. KWUA and your irrigation districts are actively engaged to fully represent your water rights and your operational needs. Together, our goal is to achieve durable, more reliable and predictable water availability, reduce ongoing legal disputes, and support the balanced management of agriculture, wildlife refuges, wildlife and fisheries, and the rural communities you call home.

While we wish that these reforms could be implemented immediately, we realize that it is necessary for Reclamation to follow applicable legal processes and proceed deliberately, in order to have a durable and defensible product. We are committed to working with Reclamation as it completes the process expeditiously.

With a challenging 2026 water year ahead and significant work underway for the future, it is more important than ever that we move forward together as a community. We are a strong community, and we are a united community. That unity will be especially important in the year ahead as we face difficult conditions together. KWUA and your irrigation districts are working in close coordination to advocate on your behalf, provide timely updates, and ensure you have access to the best available information and resources as the year continues. We are committed to keeping you informed and supported every step of the way.

We encourage you to attend KWUA's Annual Meeting on April 7, starting at 5:30 p.m. at Linman Hall at the Klamath County Fairgrounds, to learn more about what's ahead for 2026 and beyond. The keynote speaker is Dustin Sherer. Dustin serves as a Senior Advisor in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the U.S. Department of the Interior, where he works on water policy, infrastructure, and funding efforts across the West. Dustin is known for advancing water policy and getting things done, and we're looking forward to hearing his perspective on what's ahead. Please RSVP for the Annual Meeting as soon as possible at www.kwua.org

If you have any questions, please contact your irrigation district or KWUA.

Sincerely,



Scott Seus, President
Kamath Water Users Association



Brad Kirby, Manager
Tulelake Irrigation District



Rodney Cheyne, President
Klamath Irrigation District



Scott White, Manager
Klamath Drainage District



Shane McDonald, Manager
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