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April 8, 2021

Dear Editor, and Dear Neighbors:

Klamath Project irrigators find themselves in a situation that is eerily similar to 2001.

Unfortunately, there will be extremely minimal to no water from Upper Klamath Lake for irrigation this year. This will not change for the 2021 crop season, regardless of current efforts in various venues to make things work for irrigators. Upper Klamath Lake has been breaking records for low inflows every day for the past month and the forecast shows no meaningful precipitation. There are other problems that we all understand and on which we will be heard. Here we are simply being the messengers for extremely bad news.

Farmers and ranchers do not receive salaries. They pay mortgages, property taxes, irrigation districts assessments, and try to provide for their families. They provide good jobs for good people. They share this place with abundant wildlife. If the farms and our community survive, it will take upwards of eight good irrigation years to financially recover, not to mention the legacy effect on the future of our farming families.

With the efforts and cooperation of districts, irrigators, and our community, the Project has made the most of many poor situations in the past. This year, the tools to make this work simply are not sufficient to align supply with demand. Unfortunately, our only hope as a community is to seek federal funding to get the most out of any water that can be had, prevent foreclosures, and to keep a core workforce employed. We thank Senators Wyden, Merkley, and Feinstein, who are working hard to help in that effort. And we are grateful for the ongoing support from Representatives Bentz and LaMalfa.

We are well-aware of the impact to the business community that is reliant on agricultural production in the basin, and we are very sorry for the pain they will experience. We will continue pursuing strategies to correct fundamental problems in the basin, advocate common sense, and begin work with responsible parties so that we are not in this impossible and unnatural situation again in the future.

There will be much more to say, but our message today is that we must assume that our farms will receive no meaningful amount of water from Upper Klamath Lake this year, and plan accordingly.

We ask our communities to do what we can to get through this year, and fervently hope that we can weather the storm together. We must not support or tolerate action that is counterproductive or unlawful, which only tarnishes the image of this remarkable community. Take care of your families. Take care of your neighbors.

We are united in our commitment to preserve this community, provide for our posterity, and feed the world.

Sincerely,¹

/s/ Ben DuVal
Ben DuVal, President
KLAMATH WATER USERS ASSOCIATION

/s/ Ty Kliewer
Ty Kliewer, President
KLAMATH IRRIGATION DISTRICT

/s/ John Crawford
John Crawford, President
TULELAKE IRRIGATION DISTRICT

/s/ Jason Flowers
Jason Flowers, President
KLAMATH DRAINAGE DISTRICT

¹ Signatures as authorized.