

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3702

April 8, 2021

The Honorable Debra Haaland
The Secretary of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland,

I write today regarding the extremely dire water situation facing the Klamath Basin this year. Southern and Central Oregon are again experiencing severe drought conditions, and Oregon Governor Kate Brown recently declared a drought emergency in Klamath County, which is in my congressional district. Projected water allocations for the Klamath Project will likely be announced soon, and many stakeholders anticipate that the allocations will be extremely low, resulting in severe damage to entire community.

Given the extraordinary importance of this matter to communities in my district and to the people in the Klamath Basin, I request your assistance with the following items:

- 1. Fully Fund the Klamath Project Drought Response Agency (KPDRA):** As you know, the KPDRA was established by Congress to provide financial incentives and relief to farmers who normally receive surface water through the Klamath Project. This program can provide reimbursements for pumping-related energy costs in addition to other compensation, pending available funding. I urge you to use existing authorities to fund the KPDRA to the maximum extent possible.
- 2. Fully Implement Bureau of Reclamation's (BOR) Updated Legal Guidance:** Earlier this year, the BOR's Klamath Basin Area office produced a 41-page report evaluating required consultation with other federal agencies. This report calls out the importance of ensuring that the Klamath Project's consultation responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act are considered in similar fashion to other federal water projects across the West. I urge you to consider the background materials and details of this report and to implement its findings as soon as possible.
- 3. Fill the Position of Klamath Area Office Manager:** As you are aware, the role of the Klamath Area Office Manager is a critical component to maintaining dialogue between the BOR and local farmers. Additionally, this position serves as the BOR's main liaison to the Klamath community at-large. I urge you to move swiftly to fill the full-time permanent position of Klamath Area Manager so that farmers and the community have a clear point of contact at the BOR during this critical water year.

4. Fill the Klamath Facilitation Position: The last two administrations have each employed a position within the Office of the Secretary to establish relationships with all stakeholders and facilitate the pursuit of long-term water certainty in the Klamath Basin. I urge you to move forward immediately to fill this position. It is imperative that we continue ongoing discussions while simultaneously meeting the immediate short-term needs of farmers and the community during this water year.

Thank you for your attention to these extraordinarily urgent matters for the people of the Klamath Basin. If you have any questions or need any additional information from my office, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cliff Bentz", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress