

Poster 1/3: “70 Million People” (Red Map)

Thank you, Mr./Madam Speaker, and thank you Congressman LaMalfa for your years of work on the extraordinary problems in the Klamath.

1. Let me begin by talking briefly about drought and what it means. I select this as a starting place because many out here in the East have the opposite problem- too much water.
2. Sadly, to those of us in the West, the term drought is all too familiar. We know what the word means because we have lived in drought conditions for years. Drought means no water. It means catastrophe. It means bankruptcy. It means the death of trees and plants and animals and dreams. In anticipation of drought, out in the West we have developed means of surviving when droughts occur. We have built reservoirs, dams, canals, pipelines, drains, wells, and legal systems to deal with the supply and allocation, legally and practically, of water—this most precious, essential, and lifegiving resource. These systems, legal and hydraulic, provided the essential and irreplaceable foundation of communities in the West. These laws, and the water divided under them, provided a reliable, dependable system upon which futures were planned, families were raised, and rural towns (with churches, schools, and hospitals) were built. Droughts were expected, but western communities were prepared, or at least they thought they were. But change has come. Change has come in the form of the Endangered Species

Act, and in the form of even hotter and drier weather. This law and these warmer hotter conditions have upset, some would say destroyed, the systems that entire communities have relied upon for well over a century.

3. Let me be clear: the ESA is the law, and I am not suggesting that we break or violate it. Recently I called for unity in the Klamath Basin urging calm and cooperation in the face of this incredible challenge. But if ever there was an example of the need to refine and better implement the ESA, what is happening to the Klamath Basin this year is that reason.
4. But it's simply not possible to change the way the ESA is implemented in time to help this year, and as I mentioned, and all of us know, there is another thing happening—it's getting hotter. It's getting drier. And all of our systems, manmade and natural, are under stress—the stress of severe drought, and ever increasing demand for water. Demand from fish, demand from wildlife. Demand from agriculture. Demand, soon, from rural homes which rely on wells for their water. Demand from small towns reliant on wells. So what can we do?
5. First we must do our best to tell the nation that some 60-70 million people across the Western United States will be are suffering this year from the cost and the loss of severe drought. The Klamath Basin in Oregon and California unfortunately is the poster child for this disaster. Secondly, we must call out clearly and loudly that our laws, as written and enforced, when faced with the choice of instream use for ESA purposes or community, will

allocate all of the water to instream use, letting other needs go begging.

6. It must be noted that the water being given by the law and the means of enforcing it operates to give all of the water to the instream interests even though this allocation is in excess of that which would have naturally flowed down the river during summer months.
7. Once again I want it to be clear that this allocation of stored water for instream purposes is a choice of what to save and what to let go. And that choice has costs. Incredible costs.
8. Now, it is not my goal today to attack the Administration, the Department of Interior, or the Bureau of Reclamation. It is my goal to call out that this country has, through its government, and its laws, the Endangered Species Act, made a decision to take water from a community, and to use it for another purpose, placing the burden of that choice on people and other less fortunate creatures not protected by the ESA.
9. So what is that cost? Some have said at least 400 million dollars will be lost in the Klamath community, but that hardly tells the story. So let me elaborate.
10. The average farmer has mortgage payments, property taxes, irrigation district assessments, equipment payments, and most important of all: the need to house and take care of his or her family. Without water, there are no crops, no income, no ability to pay the bills all families have.
11. Many producers in the basin have supply contracts that they have worked years and years to achieve and retain. If

producers cannot deliver on those contracts, for example, with Safeway and Whole Foods Markets, those contracts are lost to other competitors and many times to other countries such as Mexico, Chile, Australia, and Brazil. Often these contracts can never be recovered.

12. Beef and dairy producers lack grass for their cattle because there has been no rain and they cannot irrigate. Hay is in short supply and prices for hay have increased dramatically. Beef and dairy producers are forced to sell their cattle because they cannot afford the cost of buying hay. Rebuilding these herds will require years and years, and much more debt. In addition, the increased supply of cattle to market causes immediate reduction in cattle prices, adding insult to injury.
13. And then there are jobs. Thousands of agriculture related jobs will be lost. People who have been employed in this area for years will move away and many will never return.
14. And then there are farms. This is the second consecutive year of what may be many years of too little water to meet the many needs of the community. As the level of uncertainty regarding the future becomes ever more pronounced, more and more young people raised on farms lose faith in the future of farming and ranching and choose other careers. The average age of the American farmer is late 50s, and keeps going up. This trend means that we will become more and more dependent upon foreign countries to sell us food. But everyone agrees, in principle, that we should grow our food here at home. The pandemic, and more recently the shipping crisis, have shown us that our global supply chain is not always dependable. This choice, along with many others, to treat

farms and farmers as though they are expendable, is bad for our nation, bad for our future. When we talk about infrastructure, let's not forget that those who know how to operate farms are part of the essential infrastructure of our nation. These choices, that don't balance the needs of our environment and community, are driving our food production into other countries putting all of us at great risk.

Poster 2/3: Before and After Photo

15. In addition, this drought will create, and is creating, extraordinarily negative environmental, public health, and safety impacts.
16. The waterfowl, reptiles and amphibians that rely on our canal system, ditch banks, and irrigated fields will simply not be there as there is no water in the canals or on the fields.
17. There have been, and will continue to be, dust storms. Think dustbowl. No exaggeration.
18. Two national wildlife refuges rely exclusively on the Klamath Project water. They will receive no water for those wetlands and habitats this year. They will dry up.
19. There are some 1800 domestic wells in Oregon within the geographic area served by the Project. Ordinarily, that canal water recharges shallow domestic wells, but this year it won't because there is no water in the canal. The limited irrigation groundwater pumping will continue to draw down groundwater levels. We are engaged in a grand experiment to find out how many domestic wells will go dry, and no one has even a guess how many that will be. Have you ever been without water in your house? Without water, a house is most definitely not a home.

20. The drought comes with another side effect: increased wildfire risk. Last summer, my district was devastated by once-in-a-generation fires that burned over a million acres in Oregon, destroyed thousands of homes and businesses, wiped away two entire towns, and killed 11 people. Dry vegetation and forests, combined with poor management, are the perfect storm for out of control wildfires. And those fires will damage the Klamath watersheds making this bad situation worse.

Poster 3/3: NOAA Precipitation Map (Brown and Blue Map)

21. Is this situation permanent?

- a. Average yearly precipitation has declined in much of the west, and all signs point to this overall trend continuing for years to come. What we must do now is reevaluate what we've been doing and adapt to the new reality. Any farmer in the west knows that on average, summers are becoming hotter and drier.
- b. You can see on this map from NOAA that average precipitation has declined in the west and increased in most of the rest of the country. We're not here to argue about the cause of the change, but we can see that the change is having a real impact on farmers and other stakeholders.

22. Short term: aid package

- a. Rep. LaMalfa and I are proposing a \$47 million critical aid package to help those hit hardest by the drought in Klamath. The package will include \$40 million for agriculture and irrigators, bringing relief levels to around \$500 per acre. This is around the financial breakeven point for farmers in the region. \$2

million will go to wildlife refuges for rescue operations for waterfowl and birds suffering from botulism. \$5 million will go to other forms of aid, including to commercial fishing losses, food aid for tribes affected by declining fish populations, and canal collapse.

23. Long term

- a. We strongly believe that there are critical legal issues that need to be addressed. Farmers and irrigation districts have strong objections to the re-allocation of stored water. Dams and reservoirs were built to capture water during the wet time of year to have water available at the dry time of year. We have done that in the Klamath Project and irrigation districts pay for the infrastructure that provides that storage.
- b. But now the government is requiring that we direct the release of the stored water away from farms in order to artificially increase the amount of flow in the Klamath River. During the irrigation season, the Klamath Project will be providing much more flow in the Klamath River than would have occurred in nature before the Project even existed.
- c. We believe that is a legal problem that needs to be addressed.
- d. More water storage is needed. A future of hotter, drier summer means this problem isn't going away. In Klamath and across the west, we need better infrastructure and a long term plan so that we have enough water for farms, cities, fish, and refuges. As snow pack decreases, water storage is critical to have a reliable supply of water when droughts occur.

- e. For long-term stability, we need the community to come together and figure out how to escape the zero sum game that gives all the water to one use, ignoring others. There are critical parties to make this happen, and we need support of that work from the state and federal governments and our community. Agreement can be reached; it has been done elsewhere.
- f. And as mentioned earlier, we need to protect and improve our watersheds. This means our forests.
- g. Each year all stakeholders face uncertainty and risk. This fight over water has fractured the Klamath community and will fracture others. To address these extraordinarily difficult problems, we must work together toward a long term solution, because this situation is simply not sustainable. Next year's weather might be worse than what we're facing now. Everybody is being harmed. There are no winners in this situation. Fish populations are not recovering, farms are not receiving enough water, and refuges are going dry. In the short run, perhaps, we can get through this year with the government's help. But in the long run, the Klamath Community will have to decide what kind of a future they want. Congressman LaMalfa and I stand ready to work with everyone in the Klamath Basin to come up with real, long-term solutions. It's time to sit down, together, and figure this out.

Mr./Madam Speaker, I yield back.