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May 30, 2014

The Honorable Tom McClintock
Chair, Subcommittee on Water and Power
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Upper Klamath River Basin Agreement

Dear Chairman McClintock:

As you know, the Governor of Oregon and members of the Oregon Congressional Delegation chartered a task force last year to address water supply, power rates, and other pressing issues in the Upper Klamath River Basin. On April 18, the Secretary of the Interior, Governor Kitzhaber, Senators Wyden and Merkley, and various others met outside of Klamath Falls to hold yet another signing ceremony to celebrate the product of the task force: the Upper Basin Comprehensive Agreement.

This latest agreement was heralded as being the ever-elusive “last, missing piece in the puzzle” that finally resolves long-standing conflicts between tribes and irrigators and between farms and fish. Unfortunately, this agreement is just one more empty promise of “peace on the river,” providing only further distraction and delay from moving forward with realistic solutions.

Amidst the great fanfare over this new agreement, there has been no mention of its fatal flaw: Section 10 of the Upper Basin Agreement expressly ties its effectiveness to Congressional approval and funding for both the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement (KHSA) and the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA).

Senator Merkley previously introduced legislation to authorize the KHSA and KBRA. No action was taken on that legislation, and it died an anonymous death at the end of the 112th Congress in December 2012. Senator Wyden has now introduced new legislation as Senate Bill 2379 that is destined for a similar fate. The reality of the situation is that the only action taken by either House of Congress on these Klamath River proposals was a vote in the House of Representatives in 2011 to deny funding for dam removal studies.

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Dam removal remains a fascination for some narrow interests in the Klamath Basin and some of the current political decision-makers in Washington, D.C., Sacramento, and Salem. However, this irrational stubbornness cannot outweigh the exorbitant costs, environmental risks, and losses of water supply, flood control, and clean energy that would accompany dam removal. Indeed, simple common sense is an insurmountable barrier to these foolish proposals that have no physical connection to water supply reliability in the Upper Basin.

As the locally-elected representatives for the vast majority of the Klamath River watershed, we are thankful for your steadfast opposition to the KHSA and KBRA. This opposition is shared by an overwhelming percentage of our own constituents. As new efforts may be made in the Senate to move forward with these proposals, we hope you will continue to provide a firm counterpoint. Once this folly has run its course, we look forward to working with you and other parties to renew negotiations on the actual future of the Klamath River.

Sincerely,

Klamath County
Board of Commissioners



James Bellet,
Chairman

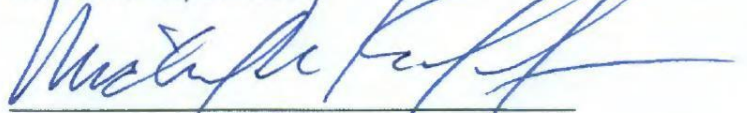


Tom Mallams,
Vice-Chair

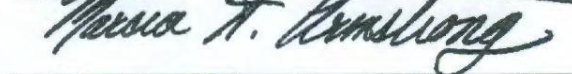


Dennis Linthicum,
Commissioner

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Board of Supervisors



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Marcia H. Armstrong,
Vice-Chair



Brandon Criss,
Supervisor-District 1



Grace Bennett,
Supervisor-District 4

Cc The Honorable Greg Walden