

## **Conservation, Ag Interests Raise Concerns with Secretary Zinke on Potential Litigation Impacts to Klamath Basin Waterfowl**

*Letter identifies impacts, urges collaborative solutions*

**(Klamath Falls, Oregon)** — A coalition of California and Oregon conservation and agricultural groups today sent [a letter](#) to U.S. Interior Department Secretary Ryan Zinke outlining concerns with recent litigation that seeks a preliminary injunction to stop all Klamath Irrigation Project diversions immediately and hold that water in Upper Klamath Lake (UKL).

“If successful, this litigation would severely impact Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge, as well as family farms – all of which provide food and habitat for migratory waterfowl and hundreds of other species,” the authors of the letter state.

On May 23, 2018 the Klamath Tribes filed a lawsuit under the Endangered Species Act to protect listed suckers by requiring more water to be reserved in UKL. The hearing to review this new potential injunction is scheduled for July 20 in San Francisco.

“The proposed preliminary injunction, if granted, would compel a complete mid-season Klamath Project shutoff and would very quickly lead to serious local crises – both in terms of the devastating impact curtailing Project water deliveries would have upon managed wetland habitats on important National Wildlife Refuges, as well as the financial impact it would have upon the local farming community,” the letter states.

Should the proposed preliminary injunction be granted, impacts to recreation on Lower Klamath NWR will also be significant. Over 130,000 visits are logged in a typical year at the Lower Klamath NWR for birdwatching, photography, and waterfowl hunting, with these visitors spending an estimated \$4.2 million annually (2015 dollars) in the local community.

Similar to California’s Sacramento Valley where rice production provides vitally important surrogate habitat and food for waterfowl, cereal grains and other wildlife-friendly agriculture in the Basin are critical to meeting the needs of Pacific Flyway waterfowl.

“The serious stress placed on birds by the lack of all these habitats could mark the beginning of the end for our Pacific Flyway waterfowl resource,” the letter states.

The letter concludes with an explanation to Secretary Zinke that the Klamath Basin is at another historic crossroads in its future and that the intent of the signatories is to improve communication and encourage dialogue between the diverse interests in the Klamath Basin.

“We do not believe there can be only one "winner" in this crisis,” the letter states. “Working together, we believe we can find solutions which meet the needs of the tribes, the local community, the Pacific Flyway, other wildlife and the fish species.” [Click here](#) to see the letter and the interests who signed it.

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