

News Release

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Wyden, Merkley Feinstein, Boxer Introduce Klamath Basin Legislation

Governor Kitzhaber Calls Legislation "the Culmination of a Decade-Long Effort"

Washington, D.C. – Moving quickly to build on the work done by local ranchers, tribes, and federal and state officials, Oregon Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley and California Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer introduced legislation today that will put into law the Upper Klamath Basin Comprehensive Agreement that was signed last month.

The Upper Klamath Basin Agreement was hammered out by a task force appointed last year by Wyden, along with Merkley, Congressman Greg Walden and Governor John Kitzhaber. It was signed on April 18 during a ceremony on the banks of Spring Creek in Klamath County.

The Senate bill gives Congressional approval to the Upper Basin Agreement, authorizing the Department of the Interior to act and achieve the agreement's benefits: increased stream flows into Upper Klamath Lake, more water certainty to irrigators, improved and protected riparian areas and economic development for the Klamath Tribes and its members. The legislation also authorizes other agreements that comprehensively settle water rights disputes in favor of collaborative solutions to water management in the basin.

"After nine months of hard work by the tribes, ranchers and government officials to craft an agreement that benefits the Upper Klamath Basin and those who rely on it, it is now time for Congress to step up," Wyden said. **"The people of the basin have set aside their differences for the benefit of the region. Congress should follow their example, pass this legislation and put the Klamath Basin on the road to recovery. I want to thank Senator Merkley for his steadfast support and help in crafting the agreement that is basis for this legislation."**

"The stakeholders of the Klamath Basin have chosen cooperation over conflict. In partnership with Senator Wyden, I'll do all I can to implement the vision and detailed plan they have developed," said Merkley. **"The people in the Basin have done the hard part, now**

it's time for the House and Senate to move forward and get this legislation passed. This is essential for both economic prosperity and environmental restoration in the Klamath Basin."

"California is in the midst of a historic drought, and this bill—in particular the authorization of the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement and the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement—will help Northern California," Feinstein said. "The three agreements authorized by the bill will improve water supply reliability, environmental recovery and economic growth for a wide range of California stakeholders. These agreements also demonstrate the benefits of different groups coming together in a spirit of compromise and acting on behalf of the greater good."

"This consensus legislation will implement a carefully crafted plan that will help farmers, fishermen, Native American communities and the environment by restoring the Klamath River Basin," Boxer said. "I applaud the leadership of Senator Wyden and Senator Merkley and all the stakeholders for coming together behind a deal that will strengthen the region's economy and the environment."

"With this legislation, Senator Wyden is honoring his commitment to work with the basin to implement a consensus-based solution to over-allocated water resources. The people of the basin are ready to move forward with the historic agreement between the Klamath Tribes and Upper Basin water users. Now it is up to Congress to take the final steps to rebuild prosperity in the region," said Governor Kitzhaber. "This is the culmination of a decade-long effort to support the vitality of the river and all who depend upon it. I applaud the determination of everyone who has committed to reshaping the future of the Klamath region and thank Senator Wyden and Senator Merkley for their strong leadership in Congress."

Now that the bill has been introduced, it will be referred to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee of which Wyden is a member.