

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0501

November 18, 2019

Rocque Merlo
Chairman, California Waterfowl Association
1346 Blue Oaks Blvd
Roseville, CA 95678

RE: Klamath Water

Dear Chairman Merlo and CWA board members;

Addressing and finding a working solution to water needs in the Klamath has been one of the most difficult issues we've faced over the years. The disagreements among differing regions and interests coupled with conflict over the Klamath Dams has routinely prevented a solution agreeable to all sides.

My goals for the Klamath have been consistent and clear. We need to ensure that farmers in the Klamath Basin have predictable and reliable water delivery. Those water deliveries need to include critical deliveries to the Klamath Refuge because it is an important part of the Pacific Flyway and vital for the waterfowl migration in the west. A properly working Project would secure the upstream dams that provide critical agricultural water. The solution must also secure downstream dams that provide affordable, clean hydroelectric power for irrigators and area residents alike in addition to economic stability for the local counties. The reservoirs behind the downstream dams are also essential to emergency services that use the water for firefighting each year. The security they provide also extends to Keno and Link that would be vulnerable to removal by those who consistently seek to eliminate agriculture altogether.

To that end, I have worked with the Bureau of Reclamation and the Trump Administration to reconsider the recent Biological Opinion on the Klamath. The current opinion was based on bad science and would have very negative consequences for farmers and the refuge. I am happy to report that last Friday the Bureau of Reclamation agreed to redo the current Biological Opinion by bringing in the expert team that was used for the Central Valley Project. They will have the new study completed and in place before March 31, 2020. I am optimistic that this new team will conduct a true and thorough review, resulting in operations designed to protect farming and ensure that there is enough water to support the refuge, even in marginal water years.

In a meeting with President Trump at the White House this fall I specifically brought up the need to find solutions to Klamath water problems including deliveries to the refuge system. He agreed to ensure that his agencies were working to make changes and replace personnel who may stand in the way.

The Klamath system has enough water, if properly managed, for all users – farmers, refuges, hydroelectric power and fish habitat. To achieve this goal, the federal government will need to help with additional system improvements, including pumps. We should do all we can to ensure that the existing

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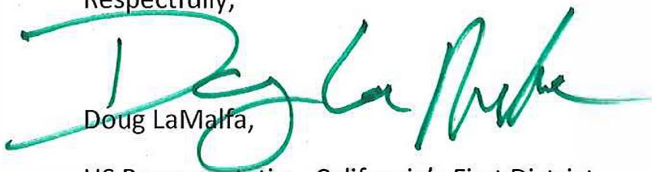
system works to the benefit of all of those who pay into it. The federal portion of that benefit should be directly attributed to the refuge.

One critical part of solving the issues in the Klamath must be addressing the skyrocketing cost of power in the region. From California's renewable mandates, to the FERC relicensing litigation costs, the cost of electric power limits pumping and other reasonable options to help lessen the impact of drought years. To that end I have worked to co-sponsor many bills over the years that would have lowered the cost of delivering power and reduced litigation costs. Unfortunately, these bi-partisan bills all stalled in the Senate. Reducing power costs will need action on both the state and federal levels. I believe that the hydropower currently available to the Basin holds a valuable key to lowering those costs in the future.

I will continue to push for a common-sense approach to addressing the issues facing the Klamath. There have been barriers to success and unfortunately for many years that has been the Federal Government and its various agencies. The Bureau of Reclamation and National Marine Fisheries Service have been particularly unhelpful in our goal of protecting water in the basin and making deliveries to the refuge. Reclamation has begun to make some changes in Washington that will be beneficial but a legacy of secret meetings and irresponsibly managed stakeholder input, where no actual policy is resolved, continues to plague the agency. I am working directly with Interior Secretary, David Bernhardt, on Klamath water issues and expect the policy to be much more productive in the coming months.

Thank you for the opportunity to give you and update on my views and efforts.

Respectfully,



Doug LaMalfa,

US Representative, California's First District