

WHY THE PROPOSED KLAMATH SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT IS BAD FOR KLAMATH BASIN NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES

Migratory birds are flocking to the basin's necklace of federal wildlife refuges straddling Oregon and California—one of the most important stops on the Pacific Flyway. As usual, the geese, mallards and terns are sharing the sanctuaries with tractors.

—Los Angeles Times (5/7/07)



Klamath Basin refuges support 80% of the Pacific migratory flyway and the largest overwintering population of bald eagles in the lower 48 states. Over the years, these refuge wetlands have been drained to make way for commercial agriculture. This long running conflict between commercial agriculture and wildlife on Lower Klamath and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) has reached a critical juncture with the recent release of the Proposed Klamath Settlement Agreement (January 15, 2008).

The settlement, though allegedly related to a potential Klamath River dam removal, contains many provisions harmful to the basin's important NWRs and has troubling implications for their future health. In addition, this complex proposal provides special water guarantees, contracts and subsidies for agribusiness at the expense of refuges, salmon, and the U.S. taxpayer.

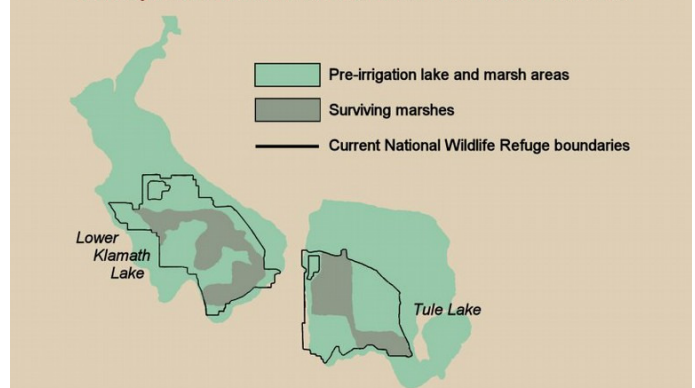
The settlement proposal locks in commercial agriculture on 22,000 acres of

critical refuge land on Tule Lake and Lower Klamath NWRs refuges for 50 years. Commercial agriculture harms wildlife and prevents management of refuge lands for fish and wildlife that our national wildlife system was created to protect. Restoring the historic refuge wetlands would provide additional wildlife habitat, offer natural storage and additional water to meet refuge water needs, and improve water quality.

Dangerous Settlement Terms

- **Locks 22,000 acres of wildlife refuge into commercial agriculture for 50 more years**
- **Limits or eliminates alternatives for improving water management and securing water supplies on the refuges**
- **Threatens the minimum water requirement of 32,000 acre-feet, which support the food base for bald eagles during winter in the basin**

Over the last 100 years the Klamath Irrigation Project has largely destroyed the Lower Klamath and Tule Lake marshes



During dry years, the settlement also puts a heavy burden on Lower Klamath NWR, locking in a management response that drastically reduces the refuge's already low

dry-year water allocation. Unfortunately, the settlement does not require water reduction by those using refuge lands for commercial agriculture during dry times. The settlement also limits opportunities for Lower Klamath NWR to increase its water supply to make up for shortfalls.



In the 1990s, NWR managers started the Walking Wetlands program, which creates temporary wetlands on commercial agriculture refuge land and some private agricultural lands. This program makes land more valuable for agriculture, yet the settlement would penalize Lower Klamath NWR by reducing refuge water deliveries for each acre in the program.

More Dangerous Settlement Terms

- **Penalizes Lower Klamath NWR for new walking wetlands by reducing NWR water allocation by one acre-foot per acre of walking wetlands within the refuges and on private agricultural land**
- **\$40 million in power subsidies and preferential power rates making draining of refuge land easier**
- **\$100 million to Klamath Project irrigators for private irrigation plan; may result in damaging groundwater development**

The settlement is rife with harmful sweetheart deals for special interests. It provides water guarantees for Klamath Project irrigators that will leave so little water that all 14,000 acres of Upper Klamath NWR marshes will periodically be drained dry. Unfortunately, through unwarranted subsidies and reallocating lease revenue to reduce the capital costs of the project, the settlement builds support for continued commercial agriculture on refuges to the benefit of all Klamath Project irrigators.

Lower Klamath and Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuges are considered two of the "crown jewels" of our national wildlife refuge system. The proposed Klamath settlement is a bad deal for the refuges. We can and must do better for these national treasures.

Our vision for Klamath NWRs is to ensure these precious public lands are managed for wildlife, not private agriculture. This can be done by phasing out the commercial agriculture on NWRs; securing a dependable and independent refuge water supply by naturally storing water on refuge lands and reducing irrigation water demand; and providing funding to restore and protect former wetlands to improve water quality and provide more habitat for fish and wildlife throughout the Klamath Basin.



For more information on the Klamath, visit www.waterwatch.org or www.oregonwild.org