

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***Klamath irrigators file suit against federal government
to protect vested water rights***

(Klamath Falls, Oregon) — The Klamath Irrigation District, in consultation with the Klamath Water Users Association, filed a lawsuit in federal court to protect vested water rights of families, farmers, and ranchers of the Klamath Basin. The current Federal practice of allocating water across the Klamath Basin is inconsistent with the Reclamation Act of 1902, violates Oregon State Law, and denies due process afforded by the U.S. Constitution.

The Reclamation Act requires Federal compliance with state water right law. In 2013, the State of Oregon issued a Finding of Fact and Order of Determination concluding Klamath Project irrigators are the sole owners of the right to beneficial use of the water stored in Upper Klamath Lake. However, since the Order of Determination was issued, the federal government has continued to operate as if it owns the right to the beneficial use of the water stored in the lake.

This lawsuit has implications across the Klamath Basin. By ignoring our water rights, the federal government is undermining the economic health of our community without any noted improvements to ecological conditions. Violating the rights of Project irrigators has added to the uncertainty and high-risk nature of farming, diminished crop potential and, in some cases, threatened to destroy entire growing seasons which significantly impact our entire economy.

We have the same rights as homeowners to use and protect our property. We have negotiated in good faith for decades and will continue to find opportunities to improve the ecological health of the Klamath River basin. We are simply asking the federal government to respect the legally granted water rights and to follow the law when making changes to those rights.