



KLAMATH IRRIGATION DISTRICT

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Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife

Testimony on Senate Bill 427

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, Senator Girod, Senator Prozanski, Senator Taylor:

Subject: Strong Opposition to Senate Bill 427

The Klamath Irrigation District (K.I.D.), a special government district serving farmers in Klamath County, our mission is to ensure sufficient water for productive use on eligible lands within the Klamath Reclamation Project. This mission has faced challenges due to ongoing issues with water management in the Klamath Basin, particularly related to the protection of our stored water reserves. Senate Bill 427 raises additional concerns by expanding federal agencies' roles in ways that will further erode our farmers' adjudicated water rights, especially the stored water reserves.

Federal agencies oftentimes overstep their authority and create tension with state regulations. SB 427 appears to provide federal officials with new tools that will erode our stored water rights, without sufficient options for recourse from our community and water right holders. This situation is further complicated by the existing state approach to water in the Klamath Basin, which appears to prioritize downstream wants over the security of our stored water rights, food security, and placing additional pressure on the farmers we serve.

The Klamath Irrigation District values practical solutions that encourage water transfers, streamline processes, allow water rights holders to raise concerns, and protect senior water rights. Our farmers have a strong track record of cooperation, often voluntarily contributing water to the Klamath River when possible.

Despite diverting only on average 3.2% of the total flow of the Klamath River for agriculture, an average of 3.4% was returned to the river below Keno—surpassing natural conditions prior to federal regulation. More water than this is now usurped by federal agencies, filling the Klamath River with water that would not naturally be there in the summer and fall.

SB 427 will continue to undermine the balance and stability of our stored water reserves. We worry SB 427 will discourage our farmers from collaborating to address the Klamath ecosystem's challenges.

We look forward to working with Oregon's leaders to find balanced approaches supporting all Klamath Basin stakeholders.

Very Respectfully,

Gene Souza, Executive Director, Klamath Irrigation District