

Saw  
Feb 11, 1992

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35 cents in Oregon, 50 cents elsewhere — Copyright 1992

## 'Wish list' for suckers nails farms

By TODD KEPPLER  
H&N Staff Writer

Reconverting 41,000 acres of prime farmland in the Klamath Basin to marshes and wetlands is high on a list of priorities in a proposed \$50 million government plan to protect two endangered species of sucker fish.

The plan was outlined in a congressional budget proposal drafted last month by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Sacramento field office. The proposal was circulated in the Klamath Basin only this week, and drew sharp criticism from agricultural interests.

Topping the wildlife service's wish-list is a request for \$35 million to acquire 35,000 acres — almost 55 square miles — of farmland that was formerly marsh on the edges of Upper Klamath Lake.

Federal officials believe restoring the marsh would improve water quality in the lake, thus boosting the suckers' odds of recovery. The proposal also calls for acquiring the water rights that accompany the land to bolster streamflows for salmon in the lower Klamath River.

Second on the list is a proposal to spend \$2.25 million to restore sucker spawning habitat in the Sprague River Basin, including the purchase or fencing of 50 miles of river to

protect the riparian zone.

A third proposal calls for terminating the annual lease of 16,000 acres of federally owned farmland inside the Tulelake National Wildlife Refuge. The fields would be converted to wetlands to benefit endangered species and waterfowl at a cost of \$8.5 million.

Wayne White, supervisor of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Sacramento field station, said today that the budget proposal was hurriedly drafted in response to a inquiry from a member of Oregon's congressional delegation to the service's Portland office. He added that the proposal is only a "first cut" at writing a list of projects that might be included in a formal sucker recovery plan.

A meeting to begin the process of writing a recovery plan is scheduled to take place later this month in Klamath Falls.

The wildlife service's proposals stirred immediate opposition in Tulelake this week.

Marshall Staunton, president of the Tulelake Growers Association, said the proposal ignores the impact on farmers in the Basin. He said he felt betrayed by the wildlife service.

"We thought we were shooting for a win-win situa-

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## Drought claiming



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Republican senators in Germany were interpreted as a warning that the United States might draw down its NATO forces if the trade talks are not successfully concluded.

## Lawyers seek stay on Haitians

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. officials knew but didn't tell the Supreme Court last month that refugees returned to Haiti had been "tortured, killed or persecuted," lawyers for the refugees say.

The lawyers asked Justice Anthony M. Kennedy Monday to order a halt to all forced repatriations, stating, "This may well be the last opportunity (the Haitians) have to right the egregious wrongs foisted upon them."

# DROUGHT

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Treasure, acting Klamath Project manager.

Bureau officials also acknowledged that unless normal precipitation patterns return this spring, no water may come from Upper Klamath Lake until at least June — even for agricultural water users with the highest priority.

In a worst-case scenario, some \$100 million in income could disappear from the Basin's economy this year if farmers in the Klamath Project cannot raise crops.

Treasure's remarks came during a meeting of the Tulelake Irrigation District's board of directors. The routine monthly meeting was moved from the district's small headquarters building to the Tulelake Fairgrounds, where more than 160 people turned out to hear Treasure's report.

Treasure said Upper Klamath Lake will not likely have enough water to begin irrigation on a regular schedule and meet sucker protection measures outlined in a biological opinion issued last year by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

"Our preliminary information from the Soil Conservation Service indicates an inflow to Upper Klamath Lake of 48 percent of average. That's a 9 or 10 percent drop from what they forecast in January," Treasure said.

"At the rate the lake is filling now, we won't be able to make the minimum required in the biological opinion for March 15." Once the minimum is exceeded, the bureau will begin deliveries, he said.

Treasure said the bureau has

taken unusual measures in the past few days to conserve water and to prepare for drought conditions this summer.

The agency on Monday ordered Pacific Power to reduce flows at Link River dam to 200 cubic feet per second, considered the minimum necessary to protect trout stocks in the Upper Klamath River.

The flow at Iron Gate Dam in northern California is expected to fall this week to 350 cubic feet per second, about one fourth of the 1,300 cubic feet minimum adopted when the dam was built.

The bureau also offered farmers who hold leases on federal farmlands in the project the option to surrender their leases and have their money refunded. Farmers have until March 13 to decide whether to hold or surrender the leases. An updated streamflow forecast is expected by March 11.

Several farmers at Tuesday's meeting in Tulelake expressed anger that reflected the reaction of loggers to spotted owl protection measures.

"The Fish and Wildlife Service is protecting the sucker and you are protecting the sucker. Who's protecting us?" one woman asked Treasure.

"We don't give a damn about the fish. We want the water," one man said.

The wildlife service's biological opinion requires Upper Klamath Lake to be maintained at an elevation of 4,142.1 feet above sea level from March 15 through May 5. The lake surface was measured Monday at 4,140.44 feet, and was estimated to be rising about .03 of a foot per day.

# WISH

From page 1

tion," Staunton said. "I think it shows tremendous bad faith when we're supposed to be working together."

Staunton also said he was incredulous that some of the proposals would benefit the suckers. He called the proposal a "big land grab."

"I think it's scandalous in a sense. I don't see the basis for making their scientific leap," he said.

The wildlife service's proposal also raised concerns among staff at the Bureau of Reclamation's Klamath Reclamation Project. A cover letter on the proposal said staff had reviewed the list.

Jim Bryant, finance officer for the project, said the letter implied the Bureau of Reclamation had given its consent to the proposals when it had not.

Bryant said the bureau supported three of 14 proposed projects. The acquisition of lands or termination of leasing federal lands were not among those the bureau approved, he added.

White said the acquisition of lands above Upper Klamath Lake would only occur with willing sellers.

"That's going to be a prerequisite through this whole thing. The service is looking for willing sellers," White said. "The community has to accept it, and the sellers have to accept it."

Converting the federally owned lease lands in the Tulelake refuge would require repeal of the 1964 Kuchel Act, which set the land aside for agriculture. The act was adopted by Congress as a compromise between farming and waterfowl interests.

Following is a list of other projects proposed by the Fish and Wildlife Service:

■ Possible removal of Chiloquin Dam on the Sprague River, \$748,000.

■ Studies in various areas of sucker needs, including taxonomy, habitat, and canal screening, \$1.6 million.

■ Construction of a sucker hatchery, \$2 million.

■ Spawning habitat restoration at Barkley Springs near Hagelstein Park, \$40,000.

■ Writing of a recovery plan, \$97,500.

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