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**Coordinated Federal Effort Allows for Klamath Project Water Deliveries in Drought-Stricken Basin**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** A coordinated Obama Administration effort will allow for meaningful water deliveries to Klamath Project water users, despite ongoing drought conditions that have severely impacted all Klamath Basin parties. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today announced expected Klamath Project allocations of 30 to 40 percent of average annual releases – approximately 150,000 acre feet – to be made available to Upper Klamath Lake irrigators. The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) also announced that drought-impacted farmers in the Klamath Project will be eligible to apply for $2 million in special drought-related funding under its Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), $1 million for Oregon farmers and $1 million for California farmers.

“The relationships developed through the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreements has made it possible for us to come together and find a way to get water to Basin farmers while honoring our Federal conservation requirements and tribal trust responsibilities,” said Secretary Salazar. “I am grateful for the leadership shown by Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Mike Connor and our other Federal agency partners in optimizing the limited water resources available this year.” An additional 50,000 acre feet or more could be added through a water bank funded by the Bureau of Reclamation, boosting overall deliveries to approximately 50 percent of average annual deliveries.

“The only way to address many of these western water issues is to come together as a team,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.  “Today’s announcement is part of our ongoing work to address both the short and long term impacts from limited water resources in rural agriculture-based communities.”

In response to this year’s dry conditions, Reclamation consulted with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administrator’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to develop a 2010 Project operations approach that is fully protective of protected species in the Basin while allowing for some meaningful irrigation releases. Reclamation and NMFS executed a new biological opinion that protects downstream fisheries, and based on its consultation with FWS and current modeling forecasts, Reclamation estimates that irrigation deliveries could begin as soon as May 15, depending upon additional precipitation in the Klamath Basin and Upper Klamath Lake levels.

“NOAA is fully engaged with its federal agency partners in developing water supply solutions for 2010. Coordination regarding water year planning has never been greater than it is today,” said Dr. Jane Lubchenco, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administrator.

“The Obama Administration will continue our coordinated approach to this very complex set of issues,” added Salazar. “Thanks to the great work of the congressional delegation and all stakeholders, we have been able to find workable solutions for the hard-hit Klamath Basin,” added Salazar.

Additional information regarding the forecasted release is available at <http://www.usbr.gov/mp/kbao/conditions.html>. Reclamation will continue to update the Klamath Project website (<http://www.usbr.gov/mp/kbao/>) with the most current information regarding lake levels and estimated inflows.

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