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WATER AND POWER

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

July 14, 2006

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The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Mike Johanns  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20250

The Honorable Carlos Gutierrez  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
14<sup>th</sup> and Constitution Ave., NW  
Room 5516  
Washington, DC 20230

James L. Connaughton  
Chairman  
Council on Environmental Quality  
722 Jackson Place, NW  
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Secretaries Kempthorne, Gutierrez, Johanns, and Chairman Connaughton,

I am requesting that you schedule and lead a Summit on the Klamath River Basin to evaluate the extensive accomplishments to date and the serious challenges that lie ahead. Through the Klamath River Basin Working Group (Working Group), federal agencies have worked closely with state and local officials and citizens to accomplish much restoration work in the Klamath River Basin. However, much work remains in the river system which greatly affects irrigators in the Klamath Basin and the coastal fishing communities in Oregon and California. I would like to revisit our efforts and assemble a bipartisan team of other federal, state, and local officials to engage today's challenges together.

I have been deeply involved in the many natural resource issues in the Klamath River Basin since April 6, 2001, when the Bureau of Reclamation announced that, for the first time since the establishment of the Klamath Reclamation Project in 1905, no water from Upper Klamath Lake would be made available for irrigation on more than 200,000 acres in the Klamath Basin. I witnessed first hand the devastating impacts to communities and the environment which can occur as the result of federal decisions – a similar situation is now occurring in the coastal fishing communities in Oregon and California.

In April of this year, the Pacific Fishery Management Council (Council) undertook a careful review of the number of naturally spawning Klamath River Chinook, the stock status, and the economic needs of local communities. The Council recommended – and the Department of Commerce approved – the use of an emergency rule to allow for a very limited salmon season which has resulted in a significant and negative economic impact to coastal fishing communities in Oregon and California.

Both of these crises are not referenced lightly. The cost to the environment and affected farmers, ranchers, fishermen and their communities is enormous, threatening the economy of the areas and causing great despair among residents. Since 2001, the Administration has proposed, and Congress has authorized, tens of millions of dollars for agency work in the Klamath River Basin. Much of it has focused on water conservation and environmental restoration which benefit endangered and threatened fish yielding projects like state-of-the-art fish screens and fish ladders at the A Canal and Link River Dam.

It is clear that we have inherited a problem that cannot be solved with any single action – the solution lies in a comprehensive, long-term approach. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report, “Endangered and Threatened Fishes in the Klamath River Basin,” published in 2004 clearly indicates that recovery of threatened salmon in the Klamath River Basin cannot be achieved by actions that are exclusively or primarily focused on one aspect. The NAS report instead emphasizes that a watershed-wide approach to species recovery – one that addresses all the stressors to fish – is essential to improving our environment and saving local economies. The NAS report stresses that increased knowledge, improved management, and cohesive community action will increase fish populations. This report, as well as other current activities and conditions, would be an excellent basis for the Summit to focus on as the federal and state governments, and affected communities, work toward a comprehensive, long-term solution to the problems in the Klamath River Basin.

I hope you will all join me in pulling together an appropriate Summit in southern Oregon in the near future. I’ll be eager to join you at it, and offer my assistance in arranging it.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue. I look forward to continuing to work with you and my colleagues in Congress in support of a long-term, successful effort to protect endangered salmon and the rural communities of the Klamath River Basin.

Best regards,



Greg Walden  
Member of Congress