



BEAR NECESSITIES? HAVING WOLVES IS BAD ENOUGH, ADDING GRIZZLY ONLY MAKES IT WORSE. Editorial | Page 6



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Basin on the brink

Tensions run high as Klamath Project irrigators, tribes try to balance limited water supply

By **GEORGE PLAVERN**
Capital Press

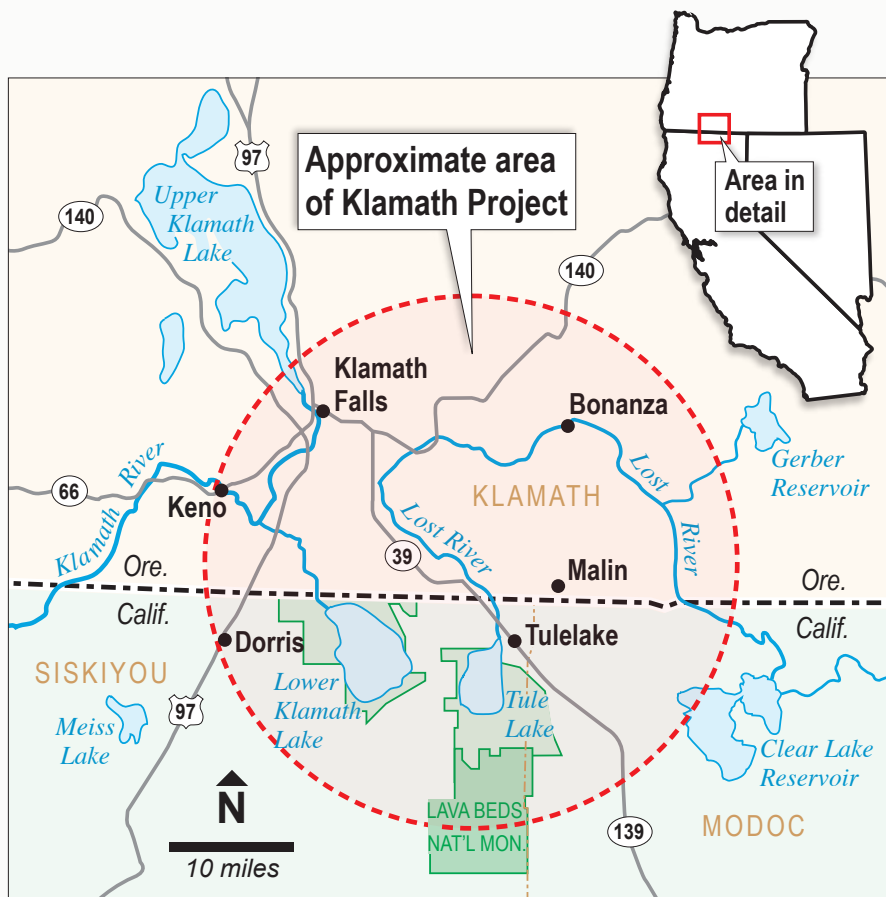
Driving along mostly empty county roads near the small town of Malin, Ore., Paul Crawford stops to survey his stunted wheat and alfalfa fields, which are soaking in the relief of a rare and much-needed spring thunderstorm. Crawford grabs a shovel and digs into the soil, finding moisture reaching an inch or so deep. It may not be much, but it is more than he expected from the previous night's rain, and enough to turn some of the wilted plants a healthier shade of green.

"That makes me feel good," said Crawford, who along with roughly 2,000 other irrigators within the Klamath Project has had little to feel good about on the farm this year.

As of late May, farmers and ranchers still do not have a water allocation, and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which manages the project, is pleading for patience as regulators juggle limited supplies of surface water to protect endangered fish.

The Klamath Tribes also filed a lawsuit May 24 against the bureau, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service, seeking an injunction forcing the agencies to provide more water in Upper Klamath Lake to ensure the survival of shortnose and Lost River suckers. The two species, which are protected under the Endangered Species Act, were once a mainstay of the tribes' diet.

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Alan Kenaga/Capital Press



Two tribal women harvesting sucker fish in 1905. Klamath Tribes filed a lawsuit May 24 against the bureau, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service, seeking an injunction forcing the agencies to provide more water in Upper Klamath Lake to ensure the survival of shortnose and Lost River suckers

Courtesy of the Klamath Tribes



Paul Crawford, a farmer near Malin, Ore., surveys a 40-acre wheat field stunted by the lack of irrigation water in the Klamath Project.

George Plaver/Capital Press

Trump admin vows to revamp H-2A rules

Changes to the foreign guestworker process will take two years

By **DAN WHEAT**
Capital Press

Proposals to improve the H-2A visa agricultural guestworker program will soon be forthcoming, four U.S. cabinet departments have announced.

The plan is to "substantially reduce" the program's complexity while giving farmers incentives to use the E-verify system — electronic verification of employment eligibility — to ensure workers are authorized to work in the U.S., the departments of Labor, Agriculture, State and Homeland Security said in a joint news release on May 24.

"The Trump Administration is committed to modernizing the H-2A-visa program rules in a way that is responsive to stakeholder concerns and that deepens our confidence in the program as a source of legal and verified labor for agriculture — while also reinforcing the program's strong employment and wage protections for the American workforce," the release states.

Changes were not specified.

"It's good news. We appreciate the fact the administration has taken a look at the program and thinks there needs to be changes," said Michael Marsh, president and CEO of the National Council of Agricultural Employers.

The rule-making process takes time with supporting evidence to be collected and periods for public comment. But the administration intends to move so that implementation maybe as early as the 2020 growing season, Marsh said.

Changes such as making the program non-seasonal to include year-round dairy workers requires legislation, but USDA will likely look at wages, he said.

Growers often view H-2A wages as too high. They also must pay to recruit, transport and house H-2A workers.

Marsh said he's working to translate total costs it into an hourly rate.

U.S. Rep. Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., who represents a district with many tree fruit growers using H-2A workers, said the announcement shows "the Trump administration has farmers' backs." Labor is scarce and means lost revenue for growers, he said.

Tom Nassif, president and CEO of Western Growers, Irvine, Calif., said any effort to simplify H-2A is welcomed and hopes it makes the program more usable by fresh produce growers.

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Wolves breed problems for Washington ranchers

Stressed cows fail to reproduce, ranchers say

By **DON JENKINS**
Capital Press

Fewer cows have been breeding on the range since wolves migrated to northeast Washington, an economic loss little known outside the cattle industry, according to the owners of the region's largest ranch.

The Diamond M ranch estimates that the rate of "open cows" — females that didn't become pregnant — has increased to about 20 percent from the historic rate of 5 percent.

"If wolves were attacking people night and day, I don't think you'd have too many people pregnant," said Len McIrvine, the patriarch of the family-owned and -operated ranch.

The Diamond M has been impacted by wolf recovery for a decade. The Washington Department of Fish and

Wildlife has culled wolfpacks that attacked the ranch's cattle. Thrust into the spotlight, the Diamond M has been vilified by some environmental groups.

McIrvine said he's accepted the public role and resulting attacks because it's necessary to put a face on the problems caused by wolves. "If you're in a war, you can't run away. You have to have troops on the front lines. You can't hide in the shadows forever," he said.

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Don Jenkins/Capital Press

Len McIrvine of the Diamond M ranch stands on the ranch's winter range May 21 in southeast Washington.

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