



August 4, 2020

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

The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Bernhardt and Secretary Perdue:

On behalf of the Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA) and our members, I am writing in support of the Klamath Water Users Association's (KWUA) three recommended priorities for the Trump Administration at the Klamath Project.

The Klamath Reclamations Project is on the Oregon-California border and is one of the earliest federal reclamation projects. The Klamath Project is currently home to over 1,200 family farms and ranches and encompasses over 170,000 acres of some of the best farmland in the West. ARA's agricultural retail members provide essential crop inputs such as fertilizer, seed, and crop protection products to their farm and ranch customers, including in areas located around the Klamath Project.

ARA supports KWUA's three recommended priorities for the Klamath Project. The first recommendation is to take a fresh look at approaches to Endangered Species Act (ESA) implementation. The ESA has been implemented in the Klamath Basin differently than anywhere else in the United States. The Trump Administration has the opportunity to re-visit outdated approaches to legal and policy issues related to this critical issue. There is an urgent need for the Administration to immediately resolve the legal and policy issues that are under review.

The second recommendation is to ensure the quality and integrity of scientific information used in the decision-making process. There are significant quality control problems with the data, underlying assumptions being made, and conclusions used for ESA decision-making for the Klamath Project. We are grateful for the recent \$1.2 million invested in applied science projects. This funding will significantly help efforts to find a long-term solution that benefits the farmers, tribes, and fish in the Klamath Basin region. ARA believes there are opportunities to reduce the ongoing injuries and hardship currently faced by rural communities of the Klamath Project.

The third recommended priority is to focus on disaster relief. The Project area is experiencing a man-made imposed drought as there is sufficient water for Klamath Project needs if the regulatory constraints imposed under the ESA were lifted. These restrictions have proven ineffective in recovering the endangered sucker fish populations. However, they have caused

August 4, 2020

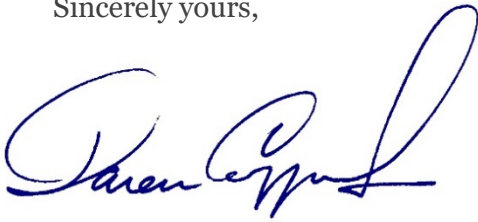
Page **2** of **2**

significant economic harm to our local communities and agricultural industry. The amount of allowable irrigation water that can be utilized by farmers and ranchers will be a small fraction of the amount that has been made available in past drought years due to the way the ESA is being mis-applied. If this issue is not favorably resolved, there is an increased risk of significant economic harm, loss of agricultural operations, and unrest in the Project area.

The KWUA is working with their congressional delegation to secure funding that would come through the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Trump Administration support is critical for the success of this important request.

ARA strongly support the KWUA's efforts and policy positions. We urge you to focus on KWUA's recommended priorities at the Klamath Project. Thank you for your review and consideration of these priorities and we look forward to further discussions.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Daren Coppock", with a large, stylized loop at the end.

W. Daren Coppock
President & CEO