

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 22, 2022

Ms. Camille Touton  
Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation  
United States Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Commissioner Touton,

We write to urge the Bureau of Reclamation to invest in critical facility upgrades at Keno Dam, located on the Klamath River, with funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), including through the new Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Authority.

The IIJA is a historic opportunity to make much needed investment in improving Western water infrastructure, particularly in the Klamath Basin which is home to the oldest Reclamation Project. Furthermore, Congress provided Reclamation with new authority and funding to implement the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration program aimed at improving the ecological health of watersheds. This program encourages Reclamation to support solutions to water scarcity that also restore river function and health and is ideally suited for this challenge.

The Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement (KHTSA), to which the Department of the Interior is a party, negotiated transfer of Keno Dam from PacifiCorp to Reclamation. Diversions from Keno Reservoir serve multiple irrigation districts and valuable wildlife refuges in California and Oregon. Funds are needed to evaluate, design, and, ultimately, construct fish passage and water quality improvements at the dam, and fish screening of the upstream irrigation diversions, so they can be implemented following the transfer of the facility to Reclamation. While other improvements to Keno Dam may be necessary to comply with Reclamation standards, fish passage, water quality, and fish screening are the primary issues that must be addressed to realize identified restoration goals, and therefore would be an ideal fit for the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration program.

These infrastructure upgrades would benefit irrigation, water quality, wildlife refuges, and salmon and steelhead fisheries in California and Oregon. Fish passage, screens, and water quality upgrades will benefit tribal, commercial, and recreational fisheries in the Klamath River as it flows downstream through California and in ocean fisheries off the coast of both states. Transfer of Keno Dam to Interior and implementation of these facility upgrades will also benefit irrigation and wildlife refuge diversions in California and Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration of this important priority for Oregon, which represents a critical step in the recovery of salmon and steelhead in the Klamath Basin while sustaining needed infrastructure for agricultural production.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator