

State of California, County of Siskiyou

Board of Supervisors Minutes, May 7, 2021

The Honorable Board of Supervisors of Siskiyou County, California, met in special session this 7th day of May 2021; there being present Supervisors Brandon Criss, Michael N. Kobseff, Ray A. Haupt, Nancy Ogren and Ed Valenzuela, County Administrator Angela Davis, County Counsel Edward J. Kiernan, and County Clerk and ex-Officio Clerk of the Board of Supervisors Laura Bynum by Deputy County Clerk Wendy Winningham.

The Board met in joint session with the Modoc County Board of Supervisors and the Klamath County, Oregon Board of Commissioners in Tulelake, California. Modoc County Chair Ned Coe summarized the process to conduct the three county special joint meeting and provided a brief overview of the issues facing the Klamath Basin and Tulelake farmers/ranchers/irrigators. Members of each County Board introduced themselves, including those members participating via ZOOM/teleconference phone from off-site locations, as well as various county staff members in attendance.

Klamath County Commissioner Derrick DeGroot led in the salute to the flag of the United States of America.

The Siskiyou County Board meeting was called to order by Chair Haupt. The Modoc County and Klamath County meetings were called to order.

Present for Modoc County: Ned Coe, Chair; Geri Byrne, Vice Chair; Patricia Cullins; and Elizabeth Cavasso, Supervisors. Supervisor Kathie Rhoads was absent.

Present for Klamath County: Derrick DeGroot, Vice Chair; and Donny Boyd, Commissioner (participated via ZOOM). Commissioner Kelley Minty Morris was absent.

Invocation - Siskiyou County Sheriff Chaplain Keith Bradley provided an invocation.

Board of Supervisors' Requests - Board of Supervisors - Joint meeting with Modoc County Board of Supervisors and Klamath County, OR Board of Commissioners.

Presentation of an overview of the 2021 water year in the Klamath Project, including impacts of irrigation curtailments and opportunities to assist Klamath Project water users.

Klamath Water Users representative Paul Simmons provided an overview of the Klamath Project that was developed to control water for beneficial uses, including a summary of the current water volume/capacity conditions in the system. Mr. Simmons voiced concerns regarding the low water inflow forecast and the negative impacts associated with the anticipated no water deliveries to the Klamath Project. Mr. Simmons further voiced concerns that the Klamath Refuge would not receive water deliveries as well, and advised of ongoing efforts being made to seek financial assistance from the State of Oregon.

Discussion followed between members of the three County Boards, Mr. Simmons, Tulelake Irrigation District Manager Brad Kirby and those in attendance regarding the need to encourage Federal legislators to provide assistance, the salmon and sucker fish populations during previous drought/minimal water years, the potential negative impacts of associated with minimal farming of crops (i.e. dust storms), impacts to the various wildlife species on the refuge, impacts to domestic groundwater wells in the area, the maps being drafted to identify crops to irrigate and fields to leave idle, irrigation district costs in place with or without water deliveries, the potential lost revenues from various contract crops that will not be grown in the area, potential negative impacts to cattle ranches and the request for each County Board to draft letters to the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) with regard to the timing to utilize cover crops and reduce environmental impacts associated with the drought.

Presentation of an overview of the 2021 water year in the Klamath Project, including impacts of irrigation curtailments and opportunities to assist Klamath Project water users. (continued)

Chair Haupt requested that Siskiyou County staff develop a letter to the RMA for consideration by the Board of Supervisors at the next meeting.

Discussion, direction and possible action re letter to various Elected Officials requesting that they work together and with the Biden Administration to authorize funding assistance for Klamath Project irrigators and to help unify agricultural communities. Letter approved.

Siskiyou County Project Coordinator Elizabeth Nielsen provided an overview of the request, including a draft letter to the Biden Administration requesting assistance with regard to the 2021 irrigation season.

There were no public comments received.

It was moved by Supervisor Criss, seconded by Supervisor Kobseff and carried, following a roll call vote with Supervisors Criss, Kobseff, Valenzuela, Ogren and Haupt voting YES.

Each County Board considered/approved similar letters on their agendas.

Discussion, direction and possible action re letter to President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. in response to an April 16, 2021 letter from the Karuk Tribe, Yurok Tribe and Klamath Tribes, etal. concerning the Klamath Basin drought. Letter approved.

Siskiyou County Project Coordinator Elizabeth Nielsen provided an overview of the request, including a draft letter to President Biden, sharing concerns that various participants in the Coalition of the Willing sent a letter to the President without informing the three Counties.

Modoc County Supervisor Elizabeth Cavasso suggested additional language be added to the draft letter to provide information specific to each county with regard to the potential impacts of the limited water availability in the Klamath Basin.

Discussion followed between members of the three County Boards and Siskiyou County Counsel Edward J. Kiernan regarding the timing associated with the draft letter, the need to send the letter soon as the letter from the Karuk Tribe, Yurok Tribe and Klamath Tribes, was sent to the President on April 16, 2021 and each County to develop their own subsequent letters, specific to their county, to be sent to the President.

It was moved by Supervisor Haupt, seconded by Supervisor Ogren and carried, following a roll call vote with Supervisors Criss, Kobseff, Valenzuela, Ogren and Haupt voting YES.

Each County Board considered/approved similar letters on their agendas.

Discussion and possible direction re possible opportunities to coordinate with workforce development and state departments to provide employment assistance in the Klamath Project as a result of the drought.

Modoc County Administrative Officer Chester Robertson provided an overview of the request, sharing concerns regarding the potential for high unemployment in the area, due to the impending Basin water shortage. Mr. Robertson additionally shared concerns that the area may not warrant State assistance with regard to unemployment as statistics for the area are diluted by the three county's jurisdiction. Mr. Robertson suggested a coordinated effort to work with the various workforce agencies toward securing the necessary employment statistics and encouraging financial assistance.

Discussion followed between members of the three County Boards and audience members regarding the various workforce and/or employment agencies that could partner in the effort and the need to highlight the Basin's unique history, including use of a public relations campaign.

Modoc County Supervisor Geri Byrne introduced Consultant Robert Weidner who participated via ZOOM/teleconference phone.

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Discussion and possible direction re possible opportunities to coordinate with workforce development and state departments to provide employment assistance in the Klamath Project as a result of the drought. (continued)

Mr. Weidner introduced Consultant Ryan Sarote who participated via ZOOM/teleconference phone.

Mr. Weidner and Mr. Sarote suggested methods/strategies that could be used to lobby for assistance with regard to employment issues in the Basin.

It was the consensus of the Siskiyou County Board to direct staff to work with Modoc and Klamath County staff to coordinate regarding workforce development and employment assistance.

Audience member Scott Sois voiced concerns regarding the possible removal of agricultural workforce as trained workers move on to different jobs and not return to agriculture.

Brief discussion followed between members of the three County Boards and audience members regarding workforce options that could benefit workers and employers alike.

Presentations from the Public

Audience member Dan Keppin spoke in support of efforts to develop a western water initiative in Washington, and shared concerns regarding the negative impact of the Endangered Species Act on the Basin.

Audience member John Crawford shared concerns regarding the negative impacts associated with the Endangered Species Act, including the increasing acres of idle farm land.

Each County Board adjourned their meetings.

Adjournment - There being no further business to come before the Board of Supervisors, the meeting was adjourned.

Attest:
Laura Bynum, County Clerk

Ray A. Haupt, Chair

By: _____
Deputy