

**Statement of Richard M. Whitman
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Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber**

**Before the
Subcommittee on Energy and Natural Resources
Of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
United States Senate**

**S. 2379 Klamath Basin Water Recovery and Economic Restoration Act of 2014
June 3, 2014**

Subcommittee Chair Schatz, and members of the subcommittee, I am Richard Whitman, Natural Resources Policy Director for Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber. I am pleased to provide the views of the Governor regarding S. 2379, the Klamath Basin Water Recovery and Economic Restoration Act of 2014.

For the last year, I facilitated the Klamath Basin Task Force, which was convened by Oregon Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, Oregon Congressman Greg Walden, and the Governor to address three remaining issues facing the Klamath Basin: (1) resolution of remaining water management issues in the upper Klamath Basin; (2) identifying options for lower cost power for the Klamath Reclamation Project and the Upper Basin (off-project) irrigators; and (3) reducing the Federal costs of achieving long-term sustainability in the Klamath Basin.

The Task Force met five times between July 2013 and February 2014, and completed its report following its last meeting. The Task Force formed subgroups to focus on the three issues in its charge: (1) the Upper Basin Water Group; (2) the Affordable Power Group; and (3) the Klamath Restoration Cost Group. The Water Group met almost every week between August 2013 and March 2014, producing an Upper Basin Agreement in Principle in early December of 2013, and a final Comprehensive Upper Klamath Basin Agreement in March of 2014. The other groups, which included members from both California and Oregon, met frequently over the same period. Work to implement the Upper Basin Comprehensive Agreement, to reduce power costs, and other elements of the Klamath agreements continues. A copy of the Task Force Report is appended to this testimony. The appendices to that report, and the Upper Klamath Basin Comprehensive Agreement itself, are available at the Oregon Governor's Natural Resources Office website: <http://www.oregon.gov/gov/GNRO/Pages/index.aspx>.

The recent history of the Klamath basin is a story of hardship falling on specific communities. I began working on Klamath basin issues in 2001, the year that irrigation in the Klamath Project was shut down to protect threatened Coho salmon downstream in California. In 2002, over 30,000 Chinook salmon died in a large fish-kill in the lower Klamath River in California, near the confluence with the Trinity River. And last year, beginning in June, irrigators outside of the

Klamath Project – in the Upper Klamath basin – were shut off when both the Klamath Project and the Klamath Tribes exercised their senior water rights.

This year is likely to be one of the driest in the Klamath basin in the last twenty years. State and Federal drought declarations were made months ago, with snowpack in the basin barely over twenty percent of normal. Despite that, because of the Upper Klamath Basin Comprehensive Agreement (UKBCA) and the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA) the very limited water that is available this year is being shared between all of the diverse interests in the Klamath basin including both irrigation communities and in-stream fisheries. Instead of pitting community against community, this year the basin is working together to get through the very tough conditions that nature has presented. Klamath Project irrigators, off-project irrigators, and downstream fisheries are all getting less water than they would like this year. But they are getting what they need to make it through.

The UKBCA and the KBRA have been signed by all non-federal parties, and are partially implemented, providing stability in the basin for now. But this stability will not last unless Congress acts to authorize federal participation in these agreements as well as the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement (KHSA). The basin has done its part to overcome conflict, now it is time for Congress to do the same and pass S. 2379, the Klamath Basin Water Recovery and Economic Restoration Act of 2014.

Governor Kitzhaber thanks Senators Ron Wyden, Jeff Merkley, Diane Feinstein, and Barbara Boxer for developing and introducing S. 2379. The states of Oregon and California are investing significant resources, including funding, to restore the economic, social and environmental fabric of the Klamath basin. The Governor urges passage of S. 2379 to bring a close to decades of conflict and allow the communities that depend on the third largest river system on the west Coast to heal.

This concludes my written statement. I am pleased to answer questions from the Committee.