Going Beyond Efficiency: Klamath Project Districts and Irrigators’ Enhanced Water Management

By Brad Kirby, Gene Souza, & Scott White

As managers of irrigation districts that divert and deliver Klamath River system water to over 170,000 acres of farms and ranches, we take our responsibility to our patrons very seriously. We know that these water users’ livelihoods are on the line: they pay for, and have a right to expect, a well-managed system. Our districts’ operations are also interrelated in important ways. And, for better or worse, water use in the Klamath Project is connected to basin-wide water controversies over water allocation and management. For all these reasons, we manage resources carefully and with pride in the high degree of efficiency that we achieve in the Klamath Project. Even then, we are doing still more to improve our stewardship.

Attributes of High Efficiency

An unfortunate but pervasive stereotype is that irrigation “wastes” large amounts of water. That is simply not true in the Klamath Project. Repeatedly, outside consultants and engineers brought in to look at our system have remarked on the high efficiency of water use in the Klamath Project. Irrigation “efficiency” can be a complicated topic, but by “efficiency,” we mean that we divert very little more than the minimum that is needed to run the system to supply the crops’ needs. At well over 90 percent efficiency, the Klamath Project is one of the most efficient systems in the world.

We achieve efficiency in a number of ways. First, our system is designed and operated to promote, and take advantage of, the recirculation and re-use of water. The tailwater or tile water from one farm is a source of supply for other farms, and the drainage or operational “spill” from one district (such as Klamath Irrigation District (KID)) is picked up in canals of another district (such as Tulelake Irrigation District (TID)), reducing the need for diversion by the second district. Similarly, “excess” water, when it occurs, becomes a source of supply to national wildlife refuges or is returned to the Klamath River a short distance downstream from where it was originally diverted. On the individual water user level, newer technologies such as sprinkler irrigation have been installed, at substantial cost, to improve performance and on-farm efficiencies.

These measures require electricity in order to pump and re-circulate water, and to power pressurized equipment such as sprinklers. It can fairly be said that low-cost power was part of the infrastructure that developed the Project. Dramatic increases in power costs over the last dozen years have challenged that system. At the same time, growers and districts have improved efficiency in their electrical power use, and work is in progress to restore more affordable power costs on a sustained basis. (See Power Committee report pg. 5)

Going Further: Recent and Ongoing District Improvements

Several of the measures that support our efficiency have been in place for generations, in some cases for nearly a century. Others have evolved with experience and the continued flow of ideas.

Lining or piping of canals is often identified as a potential water-saving approach. However, the costs and benefits of these kinds of measures are a complicated matter.
from drains and canals recharges groundwater basins (including many domestic wells), and open canals support aquatic habitats and other values. Lining or piping costs can be extreme and may provide little savings in a project that is already efficient due to its characteristic re-use. Nonetheless, these projects can, in the right circumstances, contribute to overall efficiency or improved district operations or both, depending on the situation. Some districts have over time installed pressurized pipe or lined canals in areas where it made sense to do so. For example, Shasta View Irrigation District embraces very sandy soils, and the district installed a pressurized pipe system several decades ago. TID lined canals in a strategic segment in the early 2000s. To date, these are the only projects that have been identified as having merit, but we continue to study the issue.

TID’s continuous modernization efforts have focused on new technology and equipment. Power usage improvements include a pump replacement program, installation of variable frequency drives (VFDs), and installation of traveling screens at appropriate pumping plants. The VFDs have reduced overall annual district power use and the traveling screens have improved the ability to maintain ideal pumping conditions for longevity of the pumps. Automation of headworks and check structures within TID’s canal system has allowed for more timely and effective management of water and reduced undesirable operational spill. Additionally, SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition) technology coupled with automation that TID has installed at key sites has further advanced district control and efficiency of diversion and delivery of water. In 2019 TID took the step to upgrade from the SCADA system used by the district for decades to a new system with cutting edge technology and equipment. This move has opened the doors to virtually endless possibilities and potential advancements in TID’s ceaseless efforts towards conservation and efficiency of use of water and power.

KID recently completed a major project to replace the aging C Flume with a modern siphon. This project, completed in partnership with Adkins Engineering, greatly improved irrigation water delivery resiliency for a significant number of irrigators.

KID’s additional, ongoing efforts tie to a study that showed 86 percent efficiencies within KID, but there is room for additional improvement. KID in partnership with numerous entities (to include Farmers Conservation Alliance, Sierra Controls and Adkins Engineering) is developing a modernization plan building on the success of the C-Siphon project.

In the past decade, KDD has installed two pumping stations that recirculate drainage water into its two main delivery canals.
The two pumping stations can recycle a total up to 75 cfs of drainage water when it is available. Not only do the recirculation pumping stations save water, they save power as well. Both pumping stations have solar panels offsetting the cost of power for running the pumps.

Additionally, KDD is in the process of extending one of its major drain lines to its Eastside Pumping Plant. This is a major undertaking. It is designed to deliver up to 30 cfs of additional drainage water to be recirculated back into the delivery system. This project is paid for entirely by KDD and expected to be operational by the 2020 irrigation season.

We have also, as district managers, worked to coordinate our efforts and information through bi-weekly KWUA Operations Committee meetings. At these meetings, we review our water supply situation and districts’ ongoing operations and plans, and address multiple issues of common interest related to the Project and other parties that are important in our operations. We have had participation in meetings as appropriate by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, PacifiCorp, Farmers Conservation Alliance, California Waterfowl Association, Ducks Unlimited, and private engineering firms.

A New, but Proven, Partner: Farmers Conservation Alliance

Recently, Farmers Conservation Alliance (FCA) has become a key partner in our efforts to continue systems improvements. FCA is a nonprofit corporation based in Hood River, Oregon, that has made a reputation for innovation and collaboration, focused on solutions that are good for farms and the environment. FCA has had notable successes in Central Oregon in developing irrigation modernization programs for implementation by districts and helping deliver the projects through expertise, partnerships, and leveraging of dollars. FCA has entered agreements with KID and Klamath Drainage District (KDD), and is expected to enter agreements with others, for a system assessment that will identify opportunities for system modernization as well as opportunities for in-Project power generation such as low-head hydroelectric development. The assessment phase is supported by funding from the Oregon Energy Trust, who has also been a valuable resource for individual producers seeking support for pumping efficiencies. Depending on the results of the assessment, FCA will work with districts to develop a plan that includes specific projects. Subsequently, it can help us access cost-share funds and manage logistics and red tape associated with delivery of projects.

As first Project district to contract with FCA, KID is the furthest along in that process. KID is investing in water-tracking systems to improve efficiencies of daily operations and minimize irrecoverable losses. The ongoing analysis is being conducted to further reduce losses through piping areas of the project to reduce seepage and capitalizing on the potential for developing pressurized systems which may reduce pumping costs to farmers and ranchers. While the vast majority of water loss in KID is reused by other Klamath Project water users, Klamath KID’s efforts are looking beyond efficiencies to optimization.

We look forward to working with other partners, and we will keep our patrons and the public informed as we go.

Brad Kirby is the Manager of Tulelake Irrigation District

Gene Souza is the Manager of Klamath Irrigation District

Scott White is the Manager of Klamath Drainage District
Wildlife Refuge Deliveries Exceed Expectations

Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge (LKNWR) is a key resource for waterfowl and other wildlife and a valued asset in our communities. The only means by which LKNWR can receive water is through facilities operated by TID (D Pumping Plant, P Canal) and KDD (Ady Canal). Under the recently-completed Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation for the Klamath Project, LKNWR, like Project water users, faces a poor situation.

Specifically, under current ESA restrictions, there is a total “Project Supply” from Upper Klamath Lake calculated for the March-October irrigation season at the Klamath Project. The refuge can only use Project Supply that is in excess of irrigation needs, along with some other sources that exist outside the Project Supply. In years past, there would have been more than adequate water available for refuge needs, but that has changed due to ESA requirements to maintain water levels in Upper Klamath Lake and to send water down the Klamath River.

For 2019, the Project Supply was limited to less than is needed for Project irrigation in most years, notwithstanding a winter and spring of above-normal snowpack and precipitation. Some of this precipitation yielded immediate benefit for LKNWR: TID delivered substantial amounts of water to the refuge through D Plant up until June. However, the prospects for there being water for LKNWR during the fall migration and hunting seasons were uncertain, at least through most of August.

The positive news is that, due to a combination of responsible water management by irrigators and various favorable weather conditions, KWUA informed Reclamation on September 3 that KWUA was supportive of beginning deliveries of 50 cubic feet per second (cfs) of Project Supply to LKNWR even though the irrigation season has roughly two months remaining. Within a few weeks, and through coordination with refuge management and waterfowl advocates, deliveries of Project Supply increased further, to 150 cfs. Through September, there was also 30 cfs of transferred water delivered, and by September 30, there had been 19,000 acre-feet delivered to the refuge through Ady Canal.

Additionally, subsequent rainfall created conditions for TID to begin delivery, on September 20, of about 80 cfs through D Plant. Overall, by September 30, 25,000 acre-feet has been delivered to LKNWR by D Plant, and 19,000 acre feet has been delivered through Ady Canal including nearly 8000 acre-feet in September. Ady Canal deliveries have recently increased further, to 200 cfs.

For waterfowl advocates and farmers alike, 2019 appears to have been a year that we got lucky. But luck does not last. “Even in a year with 130 percent of average precipitation, we still did not have a full allocation to the Project,” said KID Manager Gene Souza. The ESA requirements for fish are overwhelmingly the biggest risk to the water needs of the refuge as well as the Project.

KWUA will continue to advocate improvements in the federal agencies’ approach to ESA consultation in order to provide a more reasonable, stable, Project Supply for irrigation and wildlife.
What has KWUA been working on...

KWUA’s Board of Directors strive to keep member districts and their patrons, and other interested parties, informed. Board members help with the dissemination of information received at our monthly Board meetings, and staff produces a monthly newsletter.

The KWUA Board convened on September 11, 2019. Below is a recap of ongoing activities. If you would like more in-depth information, we encourage you to contact your respective district board member, listed on page 11.

Operations Committee Report
The Operations Committee reviewed and discussed the current hydrologic and division status; as of September 11, the Project had used approximately 259,000 acre-feet of Project Supply. As of September 11, Brad Kirby, Manager of TID, expressed that he believes the refuge could start diverting 150 cfs and do so through November. The board supported that Brad contact Reclamation immediately, recognizing that providing this delivery, on top of water already being provided, comes at a critical time for fall waterfowl migration, and has become available through extensive coordination and efforts by Klamath Project irrigators. Brad made the contact and refuge deliveries increased on September 16.

Gene Souza, Manager of KID, reported on the latest FCA planning efforts for KID. The FCA science team was anticipated to visit the district to check compiled information for accuracy and missing data needs. Along with KID, FCA is engaged with KDD, and expected to contract with TID and potentially Shasta View and Malin Irrigation Districts. Van Brimmer Ditch Company has also expressed interest in the program.

Power Committee Report
On September 10, KWUA and Reclamation held a public meeting at Klamath Community College regarding irrigation power cost reduction actions and provided water users and other interested parties with information opportunities for input regarding a congressionally-directed report that will evaluate irrigation power costs in the Klamath Project and the Upper Klamath Basin. America’s Water Infrastructure Act, passed last fall through the efforts of our congressional delegation, requires Reclamation to prepare a report that: (1) identifies a “power cost benchmark” (PCB) that represents the net, delivered cost for power paid in similarly-situated reclamation projects in the Pacific Northwest; and (2) provides a plan to achieve power costs in the Project that are at or below the PCB.

There was a good turnout at the September 10 public meeting (nearly 60 people). After opening remarks by Klamath Basin Area Office Director Jeff Nettleton, KWUA Executive Director Paul Simmons gave a presentation on historical irrigation power costs and the reasons that low-cost power was provided for 90 years. Reclamation’s Mike Neuman gave a presentation on power cost work that Reclamation conducted under the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement while that agreement was in effect.

Reclamation’s consultant (Kleinschmidt) described work on the PCB and (current) ten highest-ranked affordable cost measures. There were also brief presentations by other organizations conducting related activities or who could be involved in power cost reduction efforts: FCA, Oregon Energy Trust, Sustainable Northwest, and Oregon Tech.

Science Committee Report
Deschutes River C. Shasta/Trout and steelhead Status

KWUA Deputy Director Mark Johnson has been researching the impacts on the fish and invertebrate community in the Deschutes River after the installation of a Selective Water Withdrawal Tower (SWWT) at Lake Billy Chinook. The Deschutes River, like the Klamath, harbors the parasite C. shasta, which can infect salmon and cause disease and mortality. The SWWT was installed to mimic the natural flows that occurred before the dams; the tower mixes the cool water from the bottom of the reservoir with the warmer surface water. The warmer, nutrient-rich water is preferred by the polychaete worms that are intermediate hosts of the C. shasta parasite. Polychaete worm densities have increased in the lower river, and the C. shasta prevalence of infection is increasing in the salmon and steelhead as well.

“We had very low rates for good reason, but regulatory requirements change and now we are in a bad position. Some of us have seen increases over two thousand percent,” said KWUA Power Committee Chairman Ben Duval. "We’re glad that Congress recognized the problem and required Reclamation to do this work.”

Paul Simmons gives a presentation on the history of Project power.

Continued on page 10...
Fall Energy Symposium
On October 17-18, the “Fall Energy Symposium-Making Energy Work for Rural Oregon” will be held in Klamath Falls. The first day will include a tour of the Modoc Point Irrigation District and reception. The second day will consist of presentations including opening remarks by Klamath County Commissioner Mindy Morris, an orientation to the basin by former KWUA board member and historian Steve Kandra, and a panel that will focus on irrigation technologies that KWUA is helping to assemble. The symposium is hosted by Sustainable Northwest, Energy Trust of Oregon, Oregon Department of Energy, Klamath Watershed Partnership, Wisewood Energy, WY’EAST Resource Conservation & Development, and Oregon Renewable Energy Center. The location for the event, now in its fourth year, rotates among different locations in Oregon, with this year’s symposium scheduled for Klamath Falls, at the Oregon Institute of Technology. [http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/uploads/general/2019_Fall_Energy_Symposium_Agenda_Public.pdf](http://www.sustainablenorthwest.org/uploads/general/2019_Fall_Energy_Symposium_Agenda_Public.pdf)

TMDL for Water Temperature
On September 19, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) issued the Upper Klamath and Lost River Subbasins Temperature Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL). This TMDL, and one previously issued for nutrients, are required under section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act for waterbodies that are listed as “impaired” by the state. The CWA requires the DEQ to develop a plan to improve water quality in these “impaired” watersheds and these limits are called TMDLs. Although federal law does not require implementation of these plans, state regulations require implementation through DEQ and the Oregon Department of Agriculture.

KWUA, along with several districts, submitted joint comments on the draft temperature TMDL back in July. Upon initial review of the final TMDL, there do not appear to be any substantive changes from the draft released for public comment. We speculate that a September 30 court deadline, limited opportunity for modification, and late issuance of the initial draft played a role in our comments not being fully addressed. Some of the issues KWUA has with the temperature TMDL are: flow surrogacy on the Lost River, load allocations on the Straits Drain and Lost River Diversion Channel, lack of scientific data utilized in the modeling exercises, and the roles of the Designated Management Agencies/ “responsible persons”.

The districts are required to submit implementation plans within 18 months of issuance of the TMDL. However, districts can file a joint implantation plan under the stewardship agreement, and that is where KWUA will help out, participating in the planning efforts along with DEQ, USFWS, BOR and interested landowners. The Klamath Basin Stewardship Team will begin these efforts in the next couple months.

KWUA Delivers Remarks at Oregon Water Resources Congress
On October 3, KWUA Executive Director Paul Simmons spoke at the Oregon Water Resources Congress’s (OWRC) 2019 Water Law Seminar. OWRC is a statewide organization based in Salem that represents interests of irrigation districts and other water delivery agencies serving over 560,000 acres. Four Klamath Project districts, and KWUA itself, are members of OWRC and coordinate on issues that affect the Project. Paul spoke on the recent ESA consultations for the Klamath Project and resultant litigation and key legal issues expected to be of broad interest to districts in Oregon and the west.

Congratulations to Misty Wadzeck who was last month’s Sunset contest winner. Her photo can be seen on the front page of this newsletter.

Have an awesome farm photo? Submit it in our monthly photo contest! KWUA has set a challenge for October’s photo contest. This month’s challenge will be “Sunrises.” Happy photo snapping.
KWUA Washington D.C
Representatives’ Report
From The Ferguson Group, KWUA’s Washington representative.

It was a busy September. On appropriations, Congress has passed — and the President has signed — a Continuing Resolution (CR), that will fund the federal government through November 21, thus avert a government shutdown as the new fiscal year began on October 1. The legislation is needed because Congress has yet to finalize the 12 FY 2020 spending bills. The House has cleared 10 of its 12 bills in largely partisan votes, while the full Senate has not cleared any. However, the Senate Appropriations Committee has passed several bills — including Energy and Water Development (which funds the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps and DOE) which are now ready for floor consideration.

It is likely Congress will approve several appropriations bills before the new deadline of November 21. And, top appropriators are calling on leadership to put the least controversial bills on the floor for votes when they return from recess in mid-October.

Meanwhile, there has been action in the Senate on western water related legislation. The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee reported out S.2044, a bill sponsored by Sen. McSally (R-AZ), which would provide innovative financing to address extraordinary maintenance needs related to aging Reclamation infrastructure. Also, a markup is expected in the coming weeks on S.1552, a multi-title bill that addresses a range of matters, from groundwater and surface water storage and related infrastructure to funding for water recycling and desalination.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee kicked off its Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) reauthorization process with a hearing on water infrastructure challenges. Among the topics discussed at the hearing was the need to address aging western water infrastructure. The committee’s goal is to have legislation on the Senate floor early in 2020.

In the House, action on WRDA and several western water bills has been limited to committee hearings thus far. Next steps are uncertain. Administratively, the Trump Administration has announced a final rule repealing the 2015 Clean Water Rule over regulation of “waters of the U.S.” (WOTUS) under the Clean Water Act. This is the first step of a two-step process to repeal and replace the WOTUS rule. We are awaiting the release of a final replacement WOTUS rule, likely by the end of the year.

Supporting Future Generations

Congratulations to all the outstanding FFA and 4-H showmen at the 2019 Tulelake Butte Valley Fair. KWUA sponsored numerous species awards.

KWUA’s mission is to preserve and enhance the viability of irrigated agriculture for our membership in the Klamath Basin, for the benefit of current and future generations. Supporting our local multi County 4-H serves that vision well.

Trapper Cundall  Swine Champion Showman
Paolao Chavez  Grand Champion Market Hog
Emma Hischler Grand Champion Lamb
Fall Harvest Tour

On October 2, KWUA hosted the 12th annual Fall Harvest Tour, and took 68 community members to visit some of the people and operations that make Klamath Basin agriculture a success in our local, regional, national and even international economies.

Upper Klamath Klamath Basin agriculture contributes roughly $600 million in economic activity in Klamath, Modoc and Siskiyou Counties.

Participants learned how agriculture shapes the basin’s economy and how this economy is dependent on the delivery of Klamath Project irrigation water. They also saw how technology is incorporated into the operation of districts and farms to enhance stewardship of water and soils and improve production efficiencies.

This year, the morning tour stops focused on a personal look at how technology advances are integrating with existing infrastructure and machinery and how that is changing the face of businesses today.

The tour started with a visit to Anderson-Rose Dam, where TID Manager Brad Kirby discussed the progress the district has made utilizing the new technology. Brad also showed the tour how, via his phone app, he controls the gates to release more or less water.

From there, the tour stopped at Stateline Scales and heard Luke Molatore with J.W. Kerns Irrigation discuss the technology of modern-day pivot lines and what it takes to run the advanced watering system. At the same stop, KWUA Board member Ben DuVal spoke about his hay operation and the interesting opportunities, challenges and risks associated with exporting hay internationally.

The Fall Harvest tour would not be a tour without visiting a potato operation, and Baley-Trotman Farms did not disappoint. Tour participants heard from KWUA Board member Matt Trotman about this year’s harvest, the processing of the harvest, and what all goes into the quality control checks. Of course, fresh-from-the-field fried potato chips were available for everyone to taste. From there, Matt took the group to see the potato cellars, which were in full operation.

THANK A FARMER
Fall Harvest Tour cont...

At MBS Farms, Board member Marc Staunton let tour members tour his 48-acre industrial hemp farm. Marc and his partners, Dane Marshall, Jake Baley, are harvesting the flowers for CBD oil. Marc was quoted in the Klamath Falls Herald and News saying “We’re always up to trying new things,” “My grandpa – he and his brother’s philosophy was to always be trying new techniques to farming or new crops in general,” That’s how we started onions, that’s how we started growing chip potatoes, is kind of just trying to find things that fit.”

The tour ended the day with a tasting at Skyline Brewery where participants heard from brother Ty & Ry Kliewer about their cattle and farming operations and how uncertainties led them to make the decision to branch out and take their hobby of homebrewing to the next level. Their beers have become popular and prize-winning, meanwhile, grain spent in brewing is fed to their cattle.

The 12th annual Fall Harvest Tour was our largest yet. Once announced, the tour generally fills up within a few days. The tours would not be possible with our the generosity of the KWUA Board of Directors and KWUA’s annual sponsors. KWUA thanks the following sponsors for their support of our vision:

- American Ag Credit
- Basin Fertilizer & Chemical Co.
- Cal-Ore Produce
- Frank Anderson
- Gold Dust INC
- J.W. Kerns INC
- Klamath Falls News
- Liskey Farms
- Macy’s Flying Service

MBK Engineers
Monte Johnson Insurance
Somach Simmons & Dunn
PacificCorp
Jordan Cove LNG
Horsley Farms
Northwest Farm Credit.
Hydro Update

As reported by Reclamation on October 3, 2019

- 275 Thousand Acre Feet (TAF) of 322 TAF Project Supply spent to date. Cold, wet weather has drastically decreased projected Project demand. Reclamation estimates Project demand to be 287 TAF
- After meeting Ag demand, much of the remaining Project Supply is currently being delivered to the LKNWR
- Refuge = 35 TAF total since March 1;
  - ~30 cfs per day through Ady from April 1 through Sept. 30, transferred water right
  - ~50 cfs per day through Ady from Sept. 4 through Sept 30, unused Project Supply
- 18,748 TAF from Tulelake Irrigation District (D plant) since March 1–Sept 30
- Upper Klamath Lake finished September 1.39 feet higher than last year, or about 97,000AF more in storage

Continued from page 5...

OWRC Water Quality Taskforce

This research is in parallel with KWUA staff investigation of C. shasta issues on the Klamath River.

Mark Johnson and Rich Deitchman from Somach Simmons & Dunn are participating in OWRC’s task force. The task force is comprised of attorneys representing Willamette Valley and Klamath Project irrigation districts that are affected by the impending Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), including the Jordan Ramis firm which represents districts on the east side of the Project. The task force will convene monthly to discuss litigation status and correspondence with the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and other agencies. Mark said the next Upper Klamath and Lost River Subbasins TMDL Stewardship Planning meeting will likely be held in November.

IN THE KNOW

- KWUA offers notary services. Chelsea Shearer is a certified Notary Public and KWUA offers her notary services free to all members and patrons of member districts. To schedule an appointment with Chelsea, call the office at 541-883-6100.

- KWUA has copies of all contracts between the Bureau of Reclamation and districts and individuals. These contracts, of which there are hundreds, date to as early as 1909. Copies are available to our members without charge, and to others at cost.

FROM YOUR DISTRICTS

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Pioneer District Improvement will hold its monthly Board of Directors Meeting on October 7 @ 5:30 pm
- Tulelake Irrigation District will hold its monthly Board of Directors meeting on October 8 @ 8 pm
- KWUA’s Multi-District Mangers Operations regularly scheduled meeting will be October 8 @10 am
- Klamath Project Drought Response Agency will hold its monthly Board of Directors meeting on October 9@10 am in the KWUA boardroom
- KWUA will hold its monthly Board of Directors meeting on October 9 @ 2 pm
- Klamath Irrigation District will hold its monthly Board of Directors meeting on October 10 @ 1 pm
- Klamath Drainage District will hold its monthly Board of Directors meeting on October 17 @ 1:30 pm
- Poe Valley Irrigation District will hold its annual Board of Directors meeting on October 28 @ 6 pm at Lost River Ranch
Board member Gary Wright serves as the Primary for KWUA Board of Directors Position 4, an at-large position. Gary has been on the KWUA Board of Directors since 1999. Gary has runched and farmed in the Klamath Basin since 1975 and has dedicated his life to his family legacy, including through service to the greater water users’ community.

Gary and his wife Verna run a cattle ranch and farm hay and alfalfa, on their operation which totals about 4,800 acres in the Tulelake area. As a blended family, they have five grown children, of which a few have stayed to continue the legacy of farming and ranching in the basin. They have multiple grandchildren who have also taken an interest in agriculture.

Gary’s dedication to the Klamath Basin agriculture sector has become part of his lifestyle. He said, “I never really thought much about water until it was cut off in 2001 to save more for three species of fish. I had big money losses including in wells that weren’t ready to go on time.” Eighteen years later, Gary is still on the front lines of the struggles over water. In 2003, he joined KWUA because he wanted to ensure that irrigation water would be available as intended to the Klamath Project and the National Wildlife Refuges.

Along with sitting on multiple KWUA committees over the years, he has served on the Joint Prosecution Committee for Klamath Project districts in the Klamath Basin water rights adjudication and other committees associated with water and power.

Mike and son Matt, own Robert A. Byrne Company, which is a multi-generational (established in the 1870s) family cattle farm headquartered in Modoc County and comprised of 20,000 acres. Mike manages it along with his wife Bev, son Matt, and daughter Brianna. Mike and Matt also partner in SunFed Ranch, a Woodland, California-based, grass-fed cattle and beef company.

Mike is a graduate of UC Davis and has served in a variety of industry leadership positions. Some of his accomplishments and volunteer work include California Cattlemen’s Association (CCA) Public Lands Committee Chairman, CCA Vice President, National Cattleman’s Beef Association (NCBA) Policy Division Chairman and Public Lands Council President, to name just a few. He has been awarded California’s Chamber of Commerce’s Livestock Man of the Year and CCA’s “Top Hand” award.

The Byrne family is proud of a tradition of excellence developed over nearly 150 years. They carry forward a ranching legacy with the arrival of the 6th generation of Byrnes to operate and continue improving the ranch and cattle for generations to come.

Along with serving on multiple KWUA committees over the years, he has served on the Joint Prosecution Committee for Klamath Project districts in the Klamath Basin water rights adjudication and other committees associated with water and power.

CURRENT 2019 BOARD MEMBERS

Position 1 – TID: Brad Kirby & Kraig Beasley
Position 2 – KID: Jerry Enman & Gene Souza
Position 3 – KDD: Luther Horsley & Tracey Liskey
Position 4 – At-Large: Gary Wright & Mike Byrne
Position 5 – SVID/MID: Rob Unruh & Ryan Hartman
Position 7 – Van Brimmer & Sunnyside: Marc Staunton & Dave Jensen
Position 8 – Ady & Pioneer: Curt Mullis & Jason Flowers
Position 9 – KBID: Ryan Kliewer & George Ranjus
Position 10 – At-Large: Tricia Hill & Matt Trotman
Position 11 – At-Large: Ben Duval & Bob Gasser

Staff Executive Director: Paul Simmons
Deputy Director: Mark Johnson
Executive Assistant: Chelsea Shearer
KWUA Officers
President: Tricia Hill, Vice President: Ben DuVal
Treasurer: Luke Robison, Secretary: Jerry Enman