



# KLAMATH BASIN DROUGHT RESILIENCE KEYSTONE INITIATIVE



Flowing from the Oregon high desert to the redwood forest of the Northern California coast, the Klamath River boasts one of the most unique and productive watersheds in the Western United States. The Klamath River historically supported the third largest Pacific salmon runs of any river system in the continental United States. The shallow lakes and wetlands of the upper basin are a globally important stop for migratory birds on the Pacific Flyway, as well as habitat for endemic suckers and salmon species.

A series of hydroelectric dams constructed in the early to mid-1900s for flood control and power generation blocked access for salmon to much of their historic spawning and rearing habitat, while wetland draining and water pollution reduced the quantity and quality of habitat for birds and fishes. All of these stressors have been exacerbated by drought, which has become more frequent and more severe because of climate change. As a result, one species of salmon and both sucker species, Lost River and shortnose, have been listed under the Endangered Species Act, imposing restrictions on water withdrawals for irrigated agriculture and a steady stream of litigation from Tribes, water users, fishing interests and other stakeholders.

The process of removing the four main dams on the Klamath River is now underway, with completion expected in the fall of 2024. This will be the largest dam removal project in the history of the United States. Against this backdrop, historic funding from President Biden's Investing in America agenda, including the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act, as well as other federal and state sources, are supporting watershed restoration and agriculture infrastructure modernization and providing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to help create a more sustainable future for the Basin and its residents.

The Department of the Interior is uniquely positioned to improve resilience in the Klamath Basin given its responsibility to six federally recognized Tribes, a federal irrigation project, five national wildlife refuges, two national parks and federally protected fish and wildlife. To drive these improvements, as part of the Department of the Interior's [Restoration and Resilience Framework](#), the Department has launched the Klamath Basin Drought Resilience Keystone Initiative which will support work with Tribes, water users, local governments, states and other federal agencies to advance scientifically sound, community supported projects that will meaningfully impact ecosystem restoration and maximize the benefits of limited water resources.

The Klamath Basin Drought Resilience Keystone Initiative will guide commitment of \$162 million provided through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law over five years and support a wide range of restoration activities that will help recover listed species, create new habitat for fish and birds, and rethink the way water moves across the landscape to better align agriculture with ecosystem function. These activities will be developed collaboratively with the people who live and work in the Basin to maximize public support and the chances of long-term success and cooperation.

## THE KLAMATH BASIN KEYSTONE INITIATIVE INVESTS IN:

### Empowering Tribal Communities

In 2022, the Interior Department announced four Tribal water projects in Oregon and California's Klamath River Basin that would receive \$5.8 million through the Bureau of Reclamation's Native American Affairs Technical Assistance to Tribes Program to restore aquatic ecosystems, improve the resilience of habitats, and mitigate the effects of the ongoing drought crisis.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has approved the use of \$31 million as part of an agreement, commonly known as the "Mazama Funds," that will allow the Klamath Tribes to acquire nearly 90,000 acres of private land within their historic reservation boundaries that will support ecosystem restoration and economic development.

### Improving the Health of Wildlife and Ecosystems

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service deployed \$26 million from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in fiscal year 2022 for Klamath Basin restoration projects, including nearly \$16 million for ecosystem restoration projects in the Basin and \$10 million to expand the Klamath Falls National Fish Hatchery to raise juvenile endangered suckers (C'waam and Koptu).

### Investing in Public Lands

Through two Inflation Reduction Act-funded initiatives, the Inventory and Monitoring program will fund \$1.39 million in fiscal year 2023 for the National Park Service to deliver, analyze and visualize inventory and for vital sign monitoring data for use in climate change vulnerability analyses and adaptation planning. In the Klamath Basin Watershed parks, which includes Crater Lake National Park, Lava Beds National Monument and Redwood National Park, these funds will directly support long-term stream, cave, landbird and forest monitoring activities that will inform restoration efforts.

