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SUPPRESSED GOVERNMENT REPORT SHOWS KLAMATH IRRIGATION A BAD INVESTMENT

Putting water back in river would increase economic returns many times over

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Oakland, CA —

An economic analysis of Klamath River water use shows returning the water to the river would generate 30 times more economic benefit than continuing the current practice of diverting it to farmers in the Klamath Basin. The greater economic returns would come from increases in sport and commercial fishing as well as related recreational activities in the Klamath and its tributaries. The report was prepared by the US Geological Survey and was reported in today's Wall Street Journal.

Although the report has been peer reviewed and is ready for publication, the Bush administration is refusing to release it to the public. Members of the Coalition for the Klamath Basin received copies of the report (see download links below).

Word of the suppressed report came the same week a whistle blower from the National Marine Fisheries Service stepped forward to disclose that two scientific reviews mandating higher flows to protect Klamath River salmon were both overridden by non-scientists to allow irrigation priority over all other uses. **A much weaker alternative flow rate plan prepared by the federal Bureau of Reclamation was ultimately adopted. This weaker alternative will cause grave harm to salmon living in the Klamath River as evidenced by the massive fish kill that occurred in the river in late September.** This weaker plan is also currently the subject of a court challenge by a

coalition of commercial fishermen, conservation groups, Congressman Mike Thompson, and the Yurok Tribe.

Zeke Grader, executive director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations said, "This government does a great job of hiding data it doesn't like. The stench of the recent fish kill in the Klamath River is permeating to the highest levels of the Bush administration."

The groups challenging the existing Bush administration Klamath flow plan called for the release of another long suppressed government report: The Hardy Phase Two Report. This report lays out the scientific need for far greater releases of water to the Klamath to protect the long term health of Klamath River fish stocks and the communities downstream that depend on them for their economic lifeblood. It has been in "final draft" form since November 2001.

Earthjustice attorney Kristen Boyles said, "We call on the Bush Administration to come clean on the Klamath. First we learn from a whistleblower that science was overridden by politics, and now we learn that the Bush Administration has delayed an economic report that conflicts with its political agenda. The Administration must release the USGS economic report and the final Hardy Phase II Report now so that the decisions in the Klamath can be based on all information."

"We've heard a lot about 'sound science' from this Administration," said Jim Waltman, Director of Refuges and Wildlife Programs for The Wilderness Society. "It's increasingly clear that when they say 'sound' science, they mean science that 'sounds good' to their political allies and contributors. Without access to all the good data that are available, the effort to find lasting solutions in the Klamath is doomed to fail."

"Behind every threatened fish in the Klamath Basin is a Native American family, a commercial fishing family, or a family that depends on river recreation," said Dr. Kate Vandemoer, executive director of WaterWatch of Oregon. "This report shows that they are just as important to our economy as irrigation in the high desert. We need to reduce the demand for water so that everyone can get a fair share."

A copy of the USGS Economic Report is available at the link below.

The **Coalition for the Klamath Basin** includes American Rivers, Defenders of Wildlife, Headwaters, Institute for Fisheries Resources, Klamath Basin Audubon Society, Klamath Forest Alliance, Northcoast Environmental Center, Oregon Natural Resources Council, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, Sierra Club (Oregon Chapter), The Wilderness Society, and WaterWatch of Oregon.