

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 5, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Zinke:

We are deeply concerned by the U.S. Department of the Interior's decision to withhold almost \$500,000 in funding from the Klamath Tribe that has been used to support ongoing water quality research in the Upper Klamath Lake for the past four years. The loss of this previously approved and dedicated funding source for understanding the impact of water quality on the health and wellbeing of the C'waam (Lost River sucker) and Koptu (shortnose sucker) will undermine ongoing efforts to prevent their extinction.

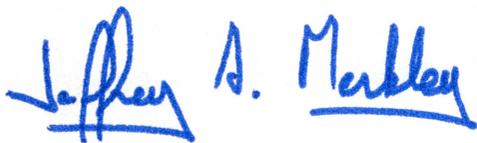
The C'waam and Koptu fish in the Upper Klamath Lake are central to regional tribes' cultural and spiritual identity. Historically, there were likely millions of C'waam and Koptu. Fewer than 100,000 C'waam and 20,000 Koptu remain today. Each year, the C'waam and Koptu are exposed to a variety of water quality stresses, including algae toxins, low dissolved oxygen, high pH, and high un-ionized ammonia concentrations. There is agreement across stakeholders in the Klamath Basin that more research into these issues is necessary to save the C'waam and Koptu.

Acting at the administration's request, Congress provided the requested funds for Fiscal Year 2018 to continue the water quality monitoring efforts detailed in the Bureau of Reclamation's budget request. The expectation was that part of this funding would be spent to fulfill the federal government's trust responsibility to the Klamath Tribe and to implement the current five-year funding agreement. As Oregon's Senators, we expect this funding to be spent as directed by Congress and described in the Fiscal Year 2018 budget request.

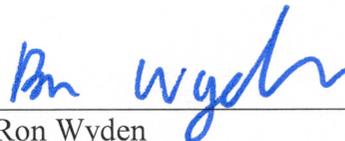
Furthermore, any progress on water challenges in the Klamath Basin, either in the short or long term, will be contingent on the willingness of stakeholders to trust one another. The decision to reprogram these funds at the eleventh hour has the appearance of an overtly political decision that will undermine efforts to reach a long-term solution in the Klamath Basin.

Given the Department's previous commitment to provide these funds and the importance of water quality research in Upper Klamath Lake, we request that you restore this funding immediately.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jeffrey A. Merkley in blue ink.

Jeffrey A. Merkley
U.S. Senator

Handwritten signature of Ron Wyden in blue ink.

Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator