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## **Klamath bashers do nothing to try to improve things**

By MIKE CONNELLY

I guess we ought to give credit to the self-proclaimed "fisheries interests" in California and Oregon, who have, over the last year, leveled a sophisticated, coordinated, and largely successful media attack against the family farmers of the Klamath Basin.

First there was the Earthjustice coalition's resurrection of the useless lawsuit against the Klamath Project's operations plan, which Earthjustice claim is illegal for no other reason than that it doesn't guarantee the depopulation of Upper Basin farm communities.

Then there was the Klamath Forest Alliance's "expert" economic study (written by Jim McCarthy, an "expert" travel writer and tourism advocate from Berkeley), which asserted that the summer of 2001 - with all its bankruptcies, displaced families, broken homes, suicides, heartbroken veterans, and high school grads who all of a sudden weren't going to college after all - was actually nothing more than a wanton orgy of pork and money-grubbing, in which farmers raked it in while humble environmentalists struggled to protect the interests of the disenfranchised

And then there was the transparently corrupt advocacy of the U.S. Geological (and, when it's convenient, Economic) Survey, which simply redefined the most established tenets of economic theory - not to mention basic math - to prove a clearly preconceived assumption, and demonstrated for us all once again why "statistics" is the next step down after "lies" and "damn lies."

And then there was the laughably manipulative report from The Wilderness Society, which was so skewed that even the Society's Regional Director Bob Freimark (Herald and News, Jan. 20) had to acknowledge that the society deliberately limited its data to that information which supported its contention that America would have been better off if Congress had just let the farmers rot.

And then there's California Fish and Game's shamelessly opportunistic and patently ideological "scientific" report on the causes of the Trinity-Klamath salmon kill, which pointed the finger at the Klamath Project, even though the kill happened hundreds of miles away from the project, immediately downstream of the Trinity river - a river which has had an average - yes, I said average - of 75 percent percent of its flow pumped down to southern California ever since the mid-1950s.

And finally, there is the latest tack, exemplified by a recent Sacramento Bee essay (Hidebound bureau roils the war for the Klamath" Jan.19, 2003) by ex-journalist and urban refugee Tim Holt. A recent transplant to the Klamath region, Holt is apparently the kind of journalist who trusts his

ideological intuition over sound journalistic research. Without the slightest hesitation he confidently proclaims that the cause of our problems here in the Klamath is the "foot-dragging" and "no-compromise position" of Klamath farmers regarding ecosystem restoration efforts.

Evidently, he reached this conclusion without bothering to speak to any of the many tribal people, agency staffers, environmentalists and irrigators who have spent the last decade or so building up a dramatic and documented record of achievement with regard to water quality, water conservation, habitat restoration, and even land retirement (Holt fails to mention that more than 20,000 acres of Klamath farm ground has already been taken out of production and converted to habitat purposes).

We can only assume that Holt relied instead on the word of the same compulsively litigious organizations that have never bothered to devote any of their substantial resources to the difficult and decidedly unsexy work of actually improving conditions on the ground, preferring instead to deploy the worthless but easily fundable tactics of litigation, press conferences, and the ideological treatises masquerading as scientific studies.

We can expect to see more of this line of argument, both because these organizations have rooms full of people whose only job is to manufacture these media barrages and, more importantly, because they know that if word gets out that the landowners of the Klamath Basin have already done more than they ever will to improve conditions in the real world of water, sun and soil, their whole strategy falls apart.

This is where the Klamath Project-bashers are most vulnerable, and they very well know it, because they have nothing in their files to show that they have made the slightest difference with regard to improving the ecological function of the Upper Klamath Basin.

And if the irrigators of the Klamath Project have any brains at all, they will take an even more forceful lead in the pursuit of ecosystem restoration, celebrating and broadcasting the achievements we have made, and genuinely committing to do the rest in the same way we do things out on the farm - with focus, with efficiency and with the enthusiasm that come from knowing that we are helping to build a better future for the generations that will live here after we're gone.

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