

State of California, County of Siskiyou

Board of Supervisors Minutes, December 15, 2025

The Honorable Board of Supervisors of Siskiyou County, California, met in special session this 15th day of December 2025; there being present Supervisors Jess Harris, Ed Valenzuela, Michael N. Kobseff, Nancy Ogren and Ray A. Haupt, County Administrator Angela Davis, County Counsel Natalie E. Reed and County Clerk and ex-Officio Clerk of the Board of Supervisors Laura Bynum by Deputy County Clerk Wendy Winningham.

The Board met in joint session with the Modoc County Board of Supervisors and the Klamath County, Oregon Board of Commissioners in Tulelake, California. Deputy County Clerk Wendy Winningham and Tiffany Martinez called roll for Siskiyou and Modoc Counties.

Modoc County Supervisor Casey Cockrell led in the salute to the flag of the United States of America.

The Siskiyou County Board meeting was called to order by Chair Ogren. The Modoc and Klamath County meetings were called to order by Chair Ned Coe and Chair Kelley Minty, respectively.

Present for Klamath County were Commissioners Andy Nichols, Kelley Minty and Derrick DeGroot.

Present for Modoc County were Supervisors Ned Coe, Geri Byrne, Shane Starr and Casey Cockrell. Supervisor Kathie Rhoads was absent.

Presentations from the Public

There were no presentations from the public.

Public Requests - Klamath Water Users Association - Discussion and possible direction re presentation on the 2025 water year and outlook for the 2026 water year. Presentation and discussion only.

Klamath Water Users Association Executive Director Elizabeth Nielsen appeared before the three Boards, summarizing and showing a sample short video (with others being developed) created to promote and educate the general public regarding the Klamath Reclamation Project and associated agricultural aspects through various social media outlets. Ms. Nielsen showed slides/photos from earlier years when the Project received reduced or no water allocations and voiced concerns regarding the negative impacts that affected the City of Tulelake and surrounding area associated with the loss of groundwater during those dry years. Ms. Nielsen advised that the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) announced a full water allocation (from Upper Klamath Lake) to meet the needs of Project irrigators in spring of 2025. Ms. Nielsen further advised that the BOR and Project irrigators worked to find ways to operate a successful harvest season within the allocation.

With regard to the 2026 water year, Ms. Nielsen provided an overview of how the BOR works under a proposed action to determine water allocations (divided between endangered species in Upper Klamath Lake and the Klamath River with the Project receiving left-over water allocation) and the efforts being made between Klamath Water Users Association (KWUA) and the BOR to find maximum flexibility for irrigation in 2026. Ms. Nielsen shared concerns regarding the need for precipitation and snowfall to benefit stored water in the area.

Bureau of Reclamation Klamath Basin Area Office Manager Alan Heck appeared before the three Boards, speaking in support of the improving water outlook developed over the last three years, including groundwater recovery.

Discussion followed between members of the three Boards, Mr. Heck and Ms. Nielsen regarding the difference between full demand for irrigation water and full allocation, evidence of salmon sighted in Klamath Lake, the Sprague River and other upstream areas, efforts being made to address and monitor salmon in the system in development of a water allocation Plan (proposed action), efforts associated with Klamath River flows (natural flows and flushing flows) following dam removal, possible impact to river recreation, an ongoing study related to downriver flows, possible litigation challenges and the need to work toward policy changes through legislation.

Public Requests - Klamath Water Users Association - Discussion and possible direction re impacts to irrigators associated with re-evaluation of Endangered Species Act requirements for the Klamath Project. Presentation and discussion only.

Klamath Water Users Association Executive Director Elizabeth Nielsen appeared before the three Boards, advising of efforts made to have the Endangered Species Act (ESA) reassessed with regard to how the ESA is applied in the Klamath Project, as a previously approved ESA document had not been implemented (was rescinded by a prior Presidential administration). Ms. Nielsen advised that the current Secretary of the Interior (SOC) ordered the reassessment/re-evaluation by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). Ms. Nielsen shared concerns that an increased lake level in Upper Klamath Lake had not benefited endangered sucker populations in the Lake. Ms. Nielsen summarized the anticipated process and timeframe to reassess/re-evaluate with re-consultation on the ESA anticipated for 2026.

In response to Modoc County Supervisor Ned Coe, Ms. Nielsen advised that support from the Tri-Counties Workgroup was appreciated with regard to development of a re-consultation document.

It was the consensus of the three Boards to wait for completion of reassessment before considering a sending a letter to the BOR supporting a re-consultation document.

Public Requests - Klamath Water Users Association - Discussion, direction and possible action re draft letter to Bureau of Reclamation Acting Commissioner Scott Cameron expressing support for commitments under the 2016 Klamath Power and Facilities Agreement, particularly measures intended to prevent fish from entering Klamath Reclamation Project diversions. Draft letter to be developed and considered by all three Boards and the Tri-Counties Workgroup at a later date.

Klamath Water Users Association Executive Director Elizabeth Nielsen appeared before the three Boards, advising that Chinook salmon had been sighted up to the Keno Dam, in Upper Klamath Lake tributaries and other areas within the Klamath Project earlier than anticipated and sharing concerns regarding the potential for listed coho salmon to come into the upper reaches of the system. Ms. Nielsen advised that the 2016 Klamath Power and Facilities Agreement was associated with dam removal efforts to address possible fish passage at the Keno Dam, although preventing fish passage near the dam had not been implemented. Ms. Nielsen further advised that re-evaluation of Endangered Species Act requirements for the Klamath Project should address the issue of preventing fish from entering the Klamath Project but not in time for 2026. Ms. Nielsen advised of the need to engage the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) and summarized a draft letter to Bureau of Reclamation Acting Commissioner Scott Cameron regarding the Tri-Counties support for engagement efforts.

Tulelake Irrigation District Board Member Scott Seus appeared before the three Boards, sharing concerns regarding the need to address potential negative impacts associated with screening to prevent fish passage on the various fish species that could be in or come into the system (two salmon species and sucker fish).

Discussion followed between members of the Boards, Ms. Nielsen, Bureau of Reclamation Klamath Basin Area Office Manager Alan Heck and Mr. Seus regarding coho salmon habitat descriptions to be revised due to dam removal, Spencer Creek as the upper limit for coho salmon for coho habitat in an updated Incidental Take Statement, the lengthy process associated with development of Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs), the potential impact of current and future Presidential administration on irrigator protection efforts and support for the draft letter to the BOR.

Modoc Nation Homeland Director Ken Sandusky appeared before the three Boards and spoke in support of water on the landscape and in support of efforts toward habitat connectivity in the system.

Tulelake Irrigation District Board member John Crawford appeared before the three Boards, sharing concerns regarding the lack of transparency with regard to information related to the fish that have been sighted within the system.

In response to Supervisor Kobseff, Ms. Nielsen recommended development of a draft letter to the BOR incorporating this discussion and suggestions to be brought back before the Tri-Counties Workgroup at their next meeting. Ms. Nielsen advised that she could work with Siskiyou County staff toward development of that letter.

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Public Requests - Klamath Water Users Association – (continued)

It was moved by Supervisor Kobseff and seconded by Supervisor Haupt to authorize a draft letter to the Bureau of Reclamation, supporting engagement regarding fish screens and other entrainment-reduction facilities to prevent fish from entering Klamath Reclamation Project diversions and including incorporating this discussion and the suggestions made.

Following brief discussion regarding the need for the Board of Supervisors to consider and/or approve the draft letter prior to consideration by the Tri-Counties and following a roll call vote with Supervisors Valenzuela, Haupt, Harris, Kobseff and Ogren voting YES, the motion carried unanimously.

Klamath County and Modoc County considered/approved similar motions.

In response to Tri-Counties Workgroup Chair Coe, it was the consensus of the three Board that the letter be signed by all members of the three Boards.

Siskiyou County Administration - Discussion and possible direction re presentation on 2025 Tri-Counties Workgroup progress, subjects including but not limited to Bureau of Reclamation coordination, gray wolf management, Keno Dam infrastructure and Secure Rural Schools funding. Presentation/information only.

Project Coordinator Joanne Johnson appeared before the three Boards and provided an updated/overview on various subjects addressed by the Tri-Counties Workgroup in 2025, including a letter sent to the Secretary of the Interior supporting appointment of Jason Phillips as Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner and a letter sent to the US Fish and Wildlife Service requesting continued efforts toward federal delisting of gray wolves. Ms. Johnson provided an overview of a meeting with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife staff and Klamath Water Users Association Executive Director Elizabeth Nielsen regarding plans for the Keno Dam, including an anticipated study of fish passage and long term plans for the Dam and a letter sent to the US Department of the Interior supporting retention of Keno Dam. Additionally, Ms. Johnson summarized a letter sent to the US House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson urging reauthorization and stabilization of Secure Rural Schools funding.

Modoc Supervisor Ned Coe spoke in support of the Tri-Counties Workgroup expanding out to other natural resource related issues in the future and the associated benefits.

Board of Supervisors' Requests - Siskiyou County Supervisor Michael N. Kobseff - Discussion and possible direction re anadromous fish populations and the return of spawners, including possible factors that may contribute to lower returns. Presentation and discussion only.

Supervisor Kobseff provided an overview of the request, sharing concerns regarding the impacts associated with regulations on anadromous fish populations concerning the return of adult and production of migrant (out-going young) fish and the impacts/limitations on agriculture in the Shasta and Scott Valley watersheds. Supervisor Kobseff additionally voiced concerns regarding the negative impacts associated with reduced returning spawners due to ocean fishing conditions and foreign fishing operations and potential regulatory monitoring impacts to the agriculture industry.

Supervisor Harris shared concerns regarding unknowns related to the future impact of dam removal on out migrating fish as well as those returning spawners.

Supervisor Haupt shared concerns regarding the impacts of wildfires on the watershed hydrologic cycle and the lack of returning fish to utilize various areas where habitats have been restored. Supervisor Haupt further shared concerns regarding the inability of the California Department of Fish and Wild to complete surveys on returning fish numbers.

In response to Tri-Counties Chair Coe, Supervisor Kobseff advised that this would be a subject to address and work on in the future.

Board of Supervisors' Requests - Modoc County Supervisor Geri Byrne - Discussion and possible direction re an update on redistricting in California ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. Presentation only.

Modoc County Supervisor Geri Byrne briefly summarized the item, advising that she was following the Federal Court case to overturn California's new Proposition 50 Congressional district map, including arguments being made by each side.

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Board of Supervisors' Requests - Modoc County Supervisor Geri Byrne – (continued)

Supervisor Byrne additionally provided an anticipated timeline for the hearing and shared concerns that a decision in the case may not be made before February 2026.

Board of Supervisors' Requests - Modoc County Supervisor Geri Byrne - Discussion and possible direction re an update regarding Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funding. Presentation and discussion only.

Modoc County Supervisor Geri Byrne turned the item over to Klamath County Commissioner Derrick DeGroot who briefly summarized the SRS Program and advised that Secure Rural Schools (SRS) funding had been reauthorized through Fiscal Year 2026 (October 2026). Commissioner DeGroot advised of the need to continue to advocate for forest management efforts, including timber harvest sales.

Supervisor Kobseff spoke in support of the efforts made to send ten school children from western states to Washington DC to advocate in support of reauthorizing SRS funding.

Discussion followed between members of the three Boards regarding the negative impacts associated with the loss of timber harvest receipt funding for counties containing National Forest System lands, current efforts to advocate for reauthorization in 2027 and beyond and the reduced amount of SRS funding over the years.

Board of Supervisors' Requests - Modoc County Supervisor Geri Byrne - Discussion and possible direction re update on the Forest Service Reorganization Act of 2025, proposed legislation that would transfer the Forest Service to the Department of the Interior from the Department of Agriculture. Presentation and discussion only.

Modoc County Supervisor Geri Byrne provided an overview of the item, advising of proposed legislation for reorganization/restructure of the US Forest Service and to establish a federal wildland fire agency within the Department of the Interior.

Discussion followed between members of the three Boards regarding support for a move to the Department of the Interior and concerns regarding the potential impacts to interactions, assistance for local communities during wildfire and other emergency situations and the need for the Tri-Counties Workgroup to further discuss at a later time.

Board of Supervisors' Requests - Siskiyou County Supervisor Jess Harris - Discussion and possible direction re gray wolf activity, cattle depredations and mitigation efforts. Staff directed to draft a letter to Congressmen LaMalfa and Bentz supporting their work on RH 845.

Supervisor Harris provided an overview of the item and voiced concerns regarding increasing numbers of wolf and cattle interactions, mitigation efforts that have been less than effective, habituated wolves sighted chasing cattle near an elementary school and the need to support efforts to delist the animals federally.

Discussion followed between members of the three Boards regarding the efforts being made to urge the administration to act on delisting, California Farm Bureau support for federal delisting, the negative impacts associated with cattle depredations and lack of lethal take options in California, adult wolves that were lethally removed in the Sierra Valley due to depredation impact to public safety, possibly placing signage in public areas to warn of locations of wolf activity/sightings and House of Representatives' legislation being considered.

Discussion followed between members of the three Boards and Project Coordinator Johanne Johnson regarding upcoming opportunities for the group to provide a letter supporting delisting efforts, comments on the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the need to point out human/public safety issues from wolves.

County Counsel Natalie E. Reed recommended that the Board provide direction for development of a draft letter to be signed and sent quickly, with the letter coming back before the Board for ratification at a later Board meeting.

Further discussion followed, including County Administrator Angela Davis, regarding direction to staff to draft a letter providing support for an upcoming House of Representatives Bill being introduced/considered concerning gray wolf issues, the letter to be signed by all members of all three Boards and including the relative House Bill number/information.

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Board of Supervisors' Requests - Siskiyou County Supervisor Jess Harris – *(continued)*

Siskiyou County Cattlemen Association President Tim Nielsen appeared before the three Boards, advising that the Cattlemen Association would support federal delisting of the gray wolf and shared concerns regarding the need for transparency from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) as to the locations and activities of collared wolves in order for famers/ranchers to deter wolf depredation.

Audience member Jerry Wright spoke in support of Canada's process for deterring wolves and in support of allowing hunting seasons for the animals.

Adjournment - There being no further business to come before the Board of Supervisors, the meeting was adjourned at 12:40 pm

Attest:
Laura Bynum, County Clerk

Nancy Ogren, Chair

By: _____
Deputy

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