

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, in times past I have come to the floor debating ways to deal with reducing the demand for water in the Klamath Basin while being able to fulfill our many obligations. The problems in the Klamath Basin are not going away this year. As we begin another summer, it looks as though there will not be enough water to go around to meet these multiple demands that fundamentally result from the Federal Government's promising more water than nature or creative plumbing can deliver.

The land management on the refuges in the basin continues to be guided by two priorities that are not just in competition but are fundamentally incompatible: The reclamation of wetlands for agriculture and the preservation of wetlands and habitat for wildlife. The situation is further complicated by the Klamath Basin tribes, four of them, which have a longstanding and unique role in the basin which predates the water allocation decisions and environmental regulations.

It is likely by the time this Congress completes the appropriations process we will have more conflicts in the basin. I hope not but I fear there may be additional fish kills and certainly another summer of dry refuges.

In the past I have come to the floor to discuss ways in the Klamath basin to reduce the water demands in the wildlife refuge which hosts 80 percent of the waterfowl in the Pacific flyway. They have been called The Everglades of the West. Unfortunately, they are the only refuges in the country where farming occurs purely for commercial purposes instead of including some benefit for wildlife.

But one of the problems that has taken place in the debate, and we have had exhaustive discussions, has been a fundamental lack of factual understanding. And I thought this year, Mr. Chairman, it might be possible to look more broadly at the underlying challenges facing the wildlife refuges in terms of water use and supply.

I have drafted language and shared it with committee staff to require the Fish and Wildlife Service to undertake a study of the water needs of the refuges both in terms of how much water and when during the year the water is needed. Much of the difficulty in finding common solutions has stemmed from our inability to have a comprehensive understanding of the competing demands. And I would hope that it would be possible in the course of a study to examine water deliveries, the amount of water necessary to be available to sustain the wetlands, issues that deal with providing the sufficient water for the wildlife refuges, feasibility of water storage.

I have a series of elements here in the study, but rather than offering up an amendment at this point because I realize the committee has had a very difficult time and they have a carefully balanced item, but as it works its way through the process I was wondering if it would be possible to work with the committee and the staff to see if there is some way to coax this information from the process. I would, if I could, yield to the Chair of the subcommittee to see if this would be possible.

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I yield to the gentleman from North Carolina.

Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina. Mr. Chairman, I thank the gentleman for yielding to me.

I commend the gentleman for his work on this difficult situation. I will commit to working with him and the Fish and Wildlife Service to see what can be done to address his concerns.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I yield to the gentleman from Washington.

Mr. DICKS. Mr. Chairman, I also want to thank the gentleman for his work and look forward to working with him on this issue. I realize how difficult this issue is in his area and complicating this, as he mentioned, is a drought that has affected the entire region. So I know how difficult this is. We all want to protect the wildlife, the waterfowl, the salmon, all of which are affected by this. So this is an important issue, and the gentleman deserves our cooperation on this.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the expressions of support and cooperation from my two friends. It is my intention to work with them to be able to find a way to provide the

information we need to avoid unduly contentious discussions here on this floor and be able to craft solutions that will protect our obligations to wildlife, the obligations to farmers who have been lured into the basin by the Federal Government to farm there, not once but on several occasions, to meet our tribal obligations, and to avoid horrendous fish kills that we have seen in the past.

I appreciate the expressions of support and look forward to working with the committee to see if we can provide this information to guide more rational decisions in the future. Hopefully, we can protect this jewel, the Everglades of the West.