

# KLAMATH BASIN INITIATIVE

2024 ANNUAL REPORT







We are pleased to present this update on Ducks Unlimited's progress conserving critical wetland habitat in the Klamath Basin.

Ducks Unlimited's vision is a Klamath Basin capable of supporting thriving waterfowl populations, productive farmland, abundant fisheries, and the cultural values of each.

## RESTORING AND RECONNECTING THE KLAMATH BASIN

The Klamath Basin is one of the most important wetland systems in North America. Each year, approximately 70 percent, or 5 million, of the Pacific flyway's waterfowl use it and the larger landscape for at least one of their life stages.

This past year has been a busy one in the Klamath Basin with some highs and lows. For the first time in 4 years, the Klamath Basin refuges were flooded providing both excellent waterfowl production in the spring and yet their lack of summer water supply created conditions for the most severe botulism outbreak in recent years. Consistently delivering water to both the Upper Klamath NWR and Tule Lake NWR continue to be the key to revitalizing the Klamath Basin. The below listed news articles highlight the significant progress being made in the Klamath Basin and DU's critical role in making strides to restore wetland habitat in the region.

[Klamath Basin water stakeholders, Department of the Interior reach landmark agreement | News | heraldandnews.com](#)

[Ducks Unlimited Supports Vital Partnership in Klamath Basin | Ducks Unlimited](#)

[DU and Partners Bring Water to Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge | Ducks Unlimited](#)

[DU, Klamath Tribes spur major investments in the Klamath Basin | Ducks Unlimited](#)

## KLAMATH BASIN INITIATIVE CURRENT ACTIONS

Ducks Unlimited is actively engaged in the development and delivery of the following actions. These collaborative actions have multiple benefits for waterfowl, agricultural, and fisheries. They utilize both traditional and novel approaches to waterfowl conservation all aimed at our Klamath Basin Vision.

### KLAMATH BASIN WETLAND HABITAT DELIVERY PROJECTS

#### ***Tulelake Irrigation District/Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge***

- In partnership with Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge, Tulelake Irrigation District and other partners, DU will conduct an infrastructure assessment to restore wetland health to benefit waterfowl, help recover endangered fish and improve agricultural sustainability.
- DU will plan and implement two new pumping stations that will improve the ability to manage water delivery and wetlands at Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge.
- DU is also exploring renewable energy options for water delivery from Tule Lake through Sheepy Ridge to the Lower Klamath.

#### ***Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge***

- DU recently completed an assessment of a large water-use efficiency project to streamline flexibility and improve water conveyance and management.
- DU will plan and implement two new pumping stations that will provide a new source of agricultural drain water to Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge.







### ***Upper Klamath National Wildlife Refuge***

In partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service DU has been planning and implementing the Upper Klamath NWR Barnes-Agency Restoration Project, a 14,000+ acre project to restore waterfowl and waterbird, improve water quality, restore habitat for federally listed fish species, restore historic creek flow paths to improve fish passage, and expand lake storage, with an estimated total project cost over \$20 million.

### ***Klamath Irrigation Project Agricultural Lands***

- In partnership with the Intermountain West Joint Venture and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we have been implementing a \$3.8 million Farm Bill grant to incentivize waterfowl friendly farming.
- We will continue to develop and deliver habitat projects on private lands focused on wetland enhancement, floodplain reconnection, and flood-irrigation improvements.

## **LEADERSHIP AND COALITION BUILDING**

- Continue to participate in the Lower Klamath Lake working group which is focused on restoration and reconnection of Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge and the Klamath River to improve habitat for waterfowl and fish as well as improve water quality.
- Continue to participate in the Lost River Working Group which is focused on improving watershed health and water security for the benefit of wildlife and people through specific strategies focused on fish, wetland, and sage steppe habitat restoration throughout the Lost River watershed.

## **COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC POLICY, AND SCIENCE**

- We will continue to raise public awareness of the critical importance of the Basin's wetlands for waterfowl and other migratory birds.
- We will continue to actively work with state and federal officials on specific actions that will improve conditions for wetlands and waterfowl in the Basin.
  - We will continue to build research partnerships that produce science that will help guide the management of our wetlands to support waterfowl, other wildlife, fish and people.





## AVIAN INFLUENZA, BOTULISM & THE DUCK HOSPITAL

In early August, Ducks Unlimited partnered with California Waterfowl Association requesting an urgent water delivery to the Tule Lake and Lower Klamath NWR's to reduce the avian influenza and botulism outbreak. After a hot summer and no additional water allocations, the outbreak was anticipated. DU and CWA played vital roles in ensuring water deliveries to both refuges.

Ducks Unlimited teamed with Bird Ally X to fund the duck hospital and responded to the Avian Influenza and Botulism outbreak August through October. [Ducks Unlimited establishes duck hospital in Klamath Basin](#) | [Ducks Unlimited](#)

Unfortunately, this year exceeds the last big outbreak in 2020. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is estimating the waterfowl and waterbird death count to be of 120,000 birds.

Ducks Unlimited continues to work on the long game for getting water to the refuges highlighting their value for helping to recover Endangered Species Act listed fish while also providing habitat for waterfowl. This involves partnering with entities to enable better water allocations to the wetlands and refuges. The recent emergency water allocation to the refuges was a positive sign of movement to meeting those goals.

DU will continue to partner with Bird Ally X as needed to combat future outbreaks.

## FUTURE OF THE BASIN

As one year passes and we look to the next, we stay vigilant and focused in meeting our greater vision for the Klamath Basin. We are working to develop and implement both short – and – long term collaborative, wetland-based solutions focused on waterfowl and fish recovery by re-establishing and mimicking historical hydrological functions within a future where currently competing resources are brought into sustainable, complementary balance. This strategy requires collaboration between all interests using innovative and solution orientated thinking with a watershed and ecosystem perspective.

## Thank You For Your Support!

Your support of the **Klamath Basin Initiative** creates tremendous conservation impact. Private funding that is broadly restricted at the initiative level gives our conservation staff the flexibility to move many projects forward, infusing funds when needed, to survey and design projects, work with partners, or write and submit applications for large, competitive state and federal grants. You truly make the difference between what we hope to do and what we actually accomplish.



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