



August 9, 2024

Bureau of Reclamation

Commissioner Camille Calimlim Touton

California-Great Basin Regional Director Karl Stock

Delivered electronically to: [pninfo@usbr.gov](mailto:pninfo@usbr.gov), [kstock@usbr.gov](mailto:kstock@usbr.gov) and [ctouton@usbr.gov](mailto:ctouton@usbr.gov)

August 9, 2024

Dear Commissioner Calimlim Touton and Mr. Stock:

We are writing to urge the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to provide sufficient water to the Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge (Tule Lake) and Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge (Lower Klamath) as soon as possible to minimize the impact of an emerging botulism outbreak with the potential to kill many thousands of nesting waterfowl and waterbirds currently using the refuges.

On August 6, 2024, a botulism outbreak was discovered at Tule Lake and has so far caused the fatality of at least hundreds of birds (potentially many more – which will become clearer in the days ahead) that depend on the refuge for breeding and migration. There have been multiple major botulism outbreaks on the refuge in recent years as the result of inadequate water deliveries and warm, stagnant water. The most recent, in 2020, killed approximately 60,000 birds, a catastrophe we cannot afford to repeat.

This spring, Klamath Drainage District (KDD) and Tule Irrigation District (TID) worked with Klamath NWR, Ducks Unlimited, and Tribal partners to fill water bodies at Tule Lake and Lower Klamath. This led to a highly productive year at the refuges for birds. However, the last water delivery to Tule Lake and Lower Klamath was in early June.

Now that a botulism outbreak has emerged, we respectfully request that the Bureau provide sufficient water (i.e. ~30,000 acre feet) to Tule Lake and Lower Klamath as soon as possible. Providing these flushing flows without delay is urgently needed to minimize a catastrophic bird kill. The water should be delivered to the refuges regularly, in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Klamath Refuge staff, until the end of September 2024 while the breeding season wraps up and the waterfowl molting period ends.

Our long-term goal remains the restoration of historic watershed function throughout the Klamath Basin. To this end, we advocate for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, BOR and others to work with the Klamath Tribes, Yurok, Karuk, and other Klamath River Tribes to restore hydrologic and floodplain connectivity to the Klamath Basin that, at a minimum, resembles historic wetland and riverine functionality.

Thank you for considering our request in the context of this immediate crisis. We have a small window of opportunity to avert the most catastrophic impacts of a botulism outbreak – and to avert a potential avian cholera outbreak – in the heart of the Pacific Flyway.

Thank you for your consideration.  
Sincerely,

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Bird Alliance of Oregon  
Eastern Oregon Biologist and Program Manager

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Bird Conservation Oregon

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CC:

DOI Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland  
Cynthia Martinez, Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System  
Sen. Jeff Merkley  
Sen. Ron Wyden