

Regular Meeting Minutes

Klamath Project Drought Response Agency
Regular Board Meeting
May 28, 2025
2:00 pm

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Marc Staunton, the President, called the Regular Board of Directors meeting of the Klamath Project Drought Response Agency (KPDRA) to order on Wednesday, May 28, 2025, at 2:08 pm at 2312 South 6th St., Suite A, Klamath Falls, OR, and via the online conference platform called Zoom.

ROLL CALL

Directors Present: Marc Staunton, Scotty Fenters, Paul Crawford, Rob Unruh, and Mike McKoen
Guests: Nathan Ratliff, Elizabeth Neilsen, Gene Souza, Kyle Knutson, Erek Fuchs, and Paul Simmons

Public Comment

No Public Comment

Review/Approve/Authorize Submission of Application for IRA Funding for Long Term Programs Identified in MOU. Subject to Final Approval by Designated Board Member

Nathan Ratliff opened the meeting and recapped the MOU and the funding that could be made available for long-term contracts to reduce water demand or modify practices. The scope of work document and budget proposal have been drafted based on the Memorandum of Understanding outlining the programs to reduce water demand.

The budget was estimated with input from Kyle Knutson; it is likely on the high side due to uncertainties around annual versus one-time expenses. Elizabeth emphasized the need for board approval of the scope before submitting the package to the local Reclamation representative, Kirk Young, to catch potential issues early. The goal is to submit the documents by next month to avoid delays that could push reviews into late summer or fall, risking missed irrigation season timing. Final detailed policies and program specifics will be developed and approved by the board later, contingent on acceptance of the initial agreement. The board will authorize a representative for final submission approval once the general framework and budget appear acceptable.

Scotty Fenters had concerns about language referencing downstream water users. He questioned whether mentioning benefits to all Klamath River watershed users might obligate the program to deliver water benefits downstream.

Paul Simmons and Elizabeth Nielsen agreed that removing or modifying parts of the sentence to focus on benefits to producers within the Klamath Project area, rather than the entire watershed, was best. This change aims to avoid unintended commitments while preserving the statement that non-participating producers could indirectly benefit.

The budget is provisional and intentionally conservative, anticipating that some one-time versus annual cost distinctions remain unclear.

The group separated the long-term contracts for demand reduction from water delivery to wildlife refuges, treating them as distinct but related efforts. The conversation emphasized navigating administrative changes and regulatory uncertainty to advance contracts and programs. The significant turnover at the local and regional offices, including the early retirement of Mike Neuman, has led the board to hope that it will lead to a more pragmatic and less adversarial approach, with Kirk Young seen as a practical contact for early approvals.

Discussion continued about penalty clauses. Rob Unruh pushed back against clauses that could force districts out for not meeting guidelines, citing the unstable regulatory environment. Paul supported negotiating with Reclamation to remove such clauses, seeing them as incompatible with long-term contracts. The group agreed that contracts should not hold districts "over a barrel,"

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given the evolving water management landscape. This stance aims to increase buy-in and reduce risk for districts joining demand reduction efforts.

The board agreed to remove extortion-like penalty clauses from contracts to encourage participation in multi-year programs, reflecting concerns about willingness to commit under uncertain future rules.

Marc Staunton recommends the contract frameworks stay open so we can build once we get the general information. Nathan did state that it does say that the contracts would be with producers, with policy details to be determined by the board. That's from the MOU that says producers will be a defined term that covers persons or entities actually engaged in farming. But to get any more specific would be subject to the policies.

Motion: To authorize submission of request for funding for long-term demand reduction programs, based upon SOW (Statement of work) and budget as presented and amended, and to authorize Marc Staunton to approve final submission documents

Motion by: Mike McKoen Second: Rob Unruh

Roll call: Unanimous, Marc Staunton, Scotty Fenters, Paul Crawford, Rob Unruh, and Mike McKoen

Motion Passes

Review/Approve/Authorize Execution of Agreement for Compensation for Provision of Water to Refuge

Nathan stated that he does not have any documents on this subject as he feels we need to answer back on the enhancement act. He recommends covering this at the next meeting. Nathan monitors progress on the refuge water contract and brings it back for review once further information is received. Marc Staunton tasked the board to review and familiarize themselves with the draft refuge water contract to prepare for future discussions after receipt of further feedback.

Motion: To approved and pay the outstanding bills as presented

Motion by: Rob Unruh Second: Scotty Fenters

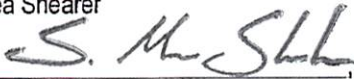
Roll call: Unanimous, Marc Staunton, Scotty Fenters, Paul Crawford, Rob Unruh, and Mike McKoen

Motion Passes

The group agreed to combine the July and August meetings into one session late in July unless urgent feedback or developments arise. Rob's term ends June 30, but he will continue until replaced, maintaining quorum as stated by the bylaws.

Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by consensus at 3:10 pm.

Minutes prepared by Chelsea Shearer

Approved: Marc Staunton  , President

Approved: Rob Unruh  , Secretary
