

# Regular Meeting Minutes

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Klamath Project Drought Response Agency  
Regular Board Meeting  
February 13, 2026  
9:00 am

## MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Marc Staunton, the President, called the regular scheduled Board of Directors meeting of the Klamath Project Drought Response Agency (KPDRA) to order on Friday, February 13, 2026, at 9:06 am at 2312 South. 6<sup>th</sup> St. Suite A, and via the online conference platform called Zoom.

## ROLL CALL

Directors Present: Marc Staunton, Scotty Fenters, Paul Crawford, Tricia Walker, Ry Kliewer, and Mike McKoen  
Guests: Kyle Knuntson, Kelsey Gill, Nathan Ratliff, Elizabeth Nielsen, Chelsea Shearer, and Cherise Wilson

## Public Comment

No Public Comment

## Review and Approve Minutes

No minutes for the board to approve.

## Review/ Approve and/ Or Ratify bills, Invoices, and Financial Reports

The drought response agency meeting discussed financial matters, including the approval of three checks and financial statements. Nathan reported on funding status, noting the closure of a previous grant and the submission of final reports. He mentioned that about \$260,000 remained from the previous funding period and was hopeful it would be rolled over for the next annual program.

Motion: Motion to accept financials as presented.

Motion by: Scotty Fenters                      Second: Ry Kliewer

Roll call: AYE, Marc Staunton, Scotty Fenters, Paul Crawford, Ry Kliewer, Tricia Walker, and Mike McKoen

Motion Passes Unanimously

## Status of Funding Applications

Nathan stated that last month they closed out grants from 2023-2025 and submitted all the reports, with \$260K left over for the previous. It appears it may be able to roll over into the next annual program. The DRA is still awaiting approval on a long-term program worth \$25 million, with additional information requested by Matt Stonebridge at a higher level. Elizabeth stated that it is obligated, and she is putting pressure on Reclamation to finalize the program. Marc stated that the meeting this am with Heather and Elizabeth made it clear that the long- term funding needs to be in place so they can make decisions on the other programs. Nathan believes there is some confusion about the different programs. Once the IRA is approved, Elizabeth will update the DRA funding program worksheet and send it back to the local and higher-up offices.

Nathan stated that the Water for the Refuge program, a \$18 million water delivery program, is believed to be progressing along. Brad confirmed approximately 80% of water had been provided through December. Once the refuge confirms Brad's water delivery numbers, Nathan will send the final invoices. Nathan has sent a draft invoice for 10,486 acre feet, as well as a second draft invoice for an additional 20,000 acre feet. The notice only went through December, but Brad is working on the January numbers and will be ready to send them. Then the board can determine what to do with the funds once received. Assuming no major snags in the approval process, the funds should be released by June 1.

Nathan stated that he has not heard any updates on the Refuge Pumping grant that funds reimbursement of \$750,000 for pumping costs. He will look into it.

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Nathan stated that the Annual program has \$9.2 Million (2025 funds reobligated to 2026 use), and hopefully, the additional \$260,000 will get rolled into that as well for use. The question is now whether the DRA can still get the funding, which has the authority of an annual \$10 million. Reclamation staffer Heather will clarify whether the contract is interpreted as \$10 million a year or if we can combine them if not used.

## **Annual Program**

The board discussed the allocation of water and funding for various agricultural programs, with a focus on the largest program having approximately 40,000 acres in 2022, and confirmed \$9.2 million available for the annual program.

They debated the use of \$18 million in refuge delivery funds and considered using some of this money for a potential 45,000-acre program, which would require an additional \$3.5-5 million. The board expressed hesitation about using the refuge money for a single-year DRA program and agreed to reserve it for larger initiatives or potential future funding shortfalls. They also touched on the possibility of using groundwater pumping as an alternative, though concerns were raised about the legal and regulatory implications of this approach.

## **Long-term IRA Program**

The group reviewed the program rules and discussed the structure of a modified practices program and how it relates to cover crops and other agricultural practices. They clarified that modified practices are separate from improved practices and can include activities like fall planting and silage. The board agreed to develop criteria for ranking modified practice proposals to incentivize beneficial practices. They also discussed adjusting the payment structure for the program, potentially splitting it into base payments, cover crop payments, and improved practices payments. The group emphasized the importance of setting a lower base payment to discourage enrollment without active management of the land.

They clarified that the modified practices program is a separate annual component with a 20% target for payments, distinct from the base and improved practices programs.

A proposed tiered payment system may be an option in which farmers receive a base payment, plus additional percentages for improved practices, with the possibility of earning the full payment amount by implementing meaningful conservation measures. They agreed to simplify the program by eliminating the improved practices payment for harvested cover crops, though there was some debate about allowing silage harvests. The group also discussed the need to clearly define designated acres for the primary program versus those in the conservation practices payment program.

On the topic of cover crop management and payment structures, most agree on a three-tier system in which farmers receive 40% for basic cover crop establishment, 40% for additional conservation practices, and 20% for specific environmental benefits like wildlife habitat or air quality. Members agreed that cover crops must be planted by April 15, with sufficient coverage by August 1, to qualify for the 40% payment. Fall-planted cover crops would receive additional incentives, potentially reaching 100% of the payment. They debated the rules for harvesting and managing cover crops, considering factors like silage and soil health benefits. The board concluded that October 15 would be the end date for the program, allowing enough time for payments and field changes while ensuring proper evaluation of crop management practices. They emphasized the need for simple, objective criteria that MBK could verify without requiring board review of each application.

Board members discussed eligibility criteria for a rotational water program, focusing on how to exclude non-productive land while allowing productive land to re-enter the program after idling. They agreed to modify the criteria to require an irrigated crop in at least one of the last five years, rather than in each of the last five years, to better target productive land. The group also considered adjusting the minimum acreage requirement from 35 to 50 acres and implementing a stepped enrollment approach based on increasing acreage increments. Some members identified confusion around the 35-acre block requirement and discussed potential issues with field splitting. They also considered adjusting the payment to a percentage rather than by acre minimum on the parcel.

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The discussion became lengthy and complex, with no clear resolution on the exact distribution method. Nathan stated he can go through this and identify areas that need further attention and options. Administration costs must be considered. The group discussed program enrollment criteria, agreeing on a 25-acre minimum parcel size and a flat-rate payment structure over 5 years, rather than annual escalators. Nathan gave members homework for the next meeting: all board members come up with a list of 5 factors (and suggested weighting) for ranking modified practices proposals, for discussion at the next meeting.

They decided to hold a vote on the method for selecting producers between a pro-rata percentage and a tiered approach at the next meeting. The group also addressed concerns about eligible acreage, particularly regarding Sealands, and agreed to review the policy language for potential inclusion in the annual program.

They quickly explored payment rates for different program types, with Mike suggesting \$350 for annual programs and \$525 for multi-year programs. Nothing was finalized, and they will review this at the next meeting.

They scheduled their next meeting for March 10 at 11 am and plan to provide food for attendees. Being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by consensus at 4:38 pm.

Minutes prepared by Chelsea Shearer

Approved: Marc Staunton  \_\_\_\_\_, President

Approved: Tricia Walker  \_\_\_\_\_, Secretary