

California Department of Water Resources



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Four State Wells Strike Water in Drought Devastated Klamath Basin

Within a few weeks of a Governor's declaration of an emergency - a drought-caused natural disaster - a well drilling operation overseen by the California Department of Water Resources struck abundant quantities of water at the first of 10-14 exploratory well sites in Tulelake on the Oregon border. By mid July three additional wells had promising water production in early tests.

Well #1 near Hill and Kandra Roads in Tulelake, drilled to 743 feet, initially gushed 9,300 gallons per minute (GPM), but was cut back to 5,100 GPM and is currently operating at maximum pump capacity of about 6,600 GPM. Potential draw down on neighboring wells is being monitored closely. The initial amount was enough water to irrigate about 850 acres of ground cover.

Three other wells were completed at 1,705 feet, 2,380 feet, and 571 feet, respectively. Water production testing began this week. Early testing of one well yielded 9,000 GPM, another well initially produced 6,000 GPM and a third well drilled had an estimated 500 GPM.

Two additional wells are being drilled to 1445 and 1970 feet, respectively. With promising rock structures these too may contain water.

The Tulelake Irrigation District (TID) will decide which acreage served by the wells will receive water.

Well #1 has full production costs of approximately \$400,000 in Natural Disaster Assistance funds administered by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

For details on each week's progress on well drilling see the Web page of the Northern District of DWR at <http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/nd/KlamathDrought/index.html>

Background

With Governor Gray Davis declaring "extreme economic peril," estimated at \$73 million, within three weeks groundwater specialists at the Department of Water Resources began coordinating the drilling of wells amidst the worst drought in the Tulelake basin since 1907.

In addition to the historic drought, enforcement of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to protect Coho salmon and two species of sucker fish in the federal Klamath Reclamation Project, eliminated all water to 90 percent of 210,000 acres and cut total water deliveries 85 percent from 500,000 to 70,000 acre-feet.

The water shortage also reduces flows to 12,000 acres of seasonal marshes in the Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge. The Refuge serves three out of every four birds on the Pacific Flyway - about 10 million birds. It has a large winter population of threatened Bald Eagles. The remaining water will serve only 6 percent of the 1.8 million waterfowl with habitat in the refuge.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

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