

California Department of Water Resources



August 29, 2001

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DWR Strikes Water in Deep Wells Groundwater Found in Drought Devastated Klamath Basin

Responding to the Klamath Basin drought, a well drilling operation overseen by the California Department of Water Resources has struck abundant quantities of water at every single one of the production well sites tested.

The Tulelake operations on the Oregon border accomplished their primary mission to develop new sources of water to partially supplement drought exhausted Klamath Basin surface water supplies. The DWR acted to implement a Governor's Emergency Declaration issued in May.

By late August every one of the nine of 10 wells tested far exceeded the original expected capacity of 2,000 gallons per minute, gpm. The wells ranged from 4,000 gpm to 12,000 gpm. The average well was 8,500 gpm. The total capacity could exceed 80,000 gpm when the last well is completed. That would quadruple the initial goal of 20,000 gpm.

The newly discovered aquifers are very deep. Well depths range from 571 feet at Well # 14 to 2,380 feet at Well # 6. Most are over 1,500 feet.

Wells of such water capacity and depth have challenged DWR to find pumps to fit the wells. Well #1 near Hill and Kandra Roads in Tulelake, drilled to 743 feet, initially gushed 9,300 gallons per minute (gpm). Its current pump has a maximum capacity of 6,600 gpm. In recent weeks Well #2 (not drilled in numerical order), drilled to 1,550 feet,

tested at 12,000 gpm. Many wells are awaiting arrival of permanent pumps.

DWR is continually testing for water quality and draw down on 40 neighboring wells.

The Tulelake Irrigation District (TID) will irrigate 20,000 acres of soil-conserving cover crops and will decide which acreage served by the wells will receive water.

Each of the wells have had full production costs of approximately \$400,000 in Natural Disaster Assistance funds administered by the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.

During fiscal year 2001-2002 DWR will continue studies of the groundwater in the basin in preparation for future droughts.

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 early private irrigation began in 1882.

In addition to the historic drought, enforcement of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to protect Coho salmon and two species of suckerfish 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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