

Upper Klamath Basin Ag Collaborative Awarded \$6 Million Grant

Ag Collaborative awarded \$6 million federal grant which they will put toward developing agricultural resiliency and restoration in the Upper Klamath Basin.

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Upper Klamath Basin Ag Collaborative was awarded a \$6 million federal grant which they will put toward developing agricultural resiliency and restoration in the Upper Klamath Basin—specifically the Sprague River—to be followed by the Klamath Marsh, along with the Williamson and Wood rivers.



“The Ag Collaborative is a voluntary, non-regulatory rancher-to-rancher effort. We are about implementing a new way forward that combines the inherent benefits of a large-scale restoration of the Sprague—raising the water table, slowing the water down, retaining moisture for slower release over time, with the benefits of modified ag practices,” said Ag Collaborative Executive Director Larry Nicholson, whose family owns a ranch in Fort Klamath.

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Larry Nicholson

Kevin Newman, Ag Collaborative founding board member and ranch owner in Bly, Oregon explains, “The Ag Collaborative will make a big impact in the upper Klamath Basin—helping to preserve ranch opportunities for the

next generation.”

As environmental challenges and agricultural uncertainties continue to impact the region, the Ag Collaborative will foster sustainable practices, enhance community engagement, and facilitate

partnerships that empower local ranchers and others to successfully navigate these challenges.

By collaborating with different groups—including landowners, producers, tribes, governments, and other stakeholders—the Ag Collaborative strikes a balance between conservation and the health and wellbeing of ranch and farming operations. Partners include Klamath Tribes Ambodat Department, Sustainable Northwest, Klamath Watershed Partnership, Trout Unlimited, Klamath Soil and Water Conservation District, Intermountain West Joint Venture, Oregon Agricultural Trust, and Resource Environmental Solutions (RES).

The Ag Collaborative will work with ranchers and farmers in actionable ways to improve water quantity and quality at the same time, make ranches and farms more drought resilient, lower the potential of being in a critical groundwater area, increase cold-water streams flowing into the Sprague, improve water quality and the health of the fisheries, improve waterfowl habitat, reduce cost of ground-water pumping, and increase the value of ranches and farms.

“You cannot have true restoration without equal consideration of ag resiliency,” said Nicholson.

According to Nicholson, the Ag Collaborative maintains a constant awareness of the interconnection between river and upland restoration and the needs of agriculture—because both impact the health of the watershed and the way of life for ranch families and landowners.

Commissioner Derrick DeGroot agrees, “The Klamath County Board of Commissioners has been apprised of the work the Ag Collaborative is doing to create a win-win for the Upper Basin, for both the ag community and the Klamath Tribes. I am optimistic that this effort will produce tangible benefits for the Upper Basin.”

Jim Root, Upper Klamath Basin rancher and Ag Collaborative founding board member, clarifies, “The Ag Collaborative’s goals are consistent with Klamath Basin Integrated Fisheries Restoration & Monitoring Plan. We are bringing ag and other interests together. We’re doing the hard work of demonstrating that large scale river restoration can materially benefit both ag operations and the local environment. It’s a win-win instead of a win-lose proposition.”

Formed in 2022, the Upper Klamath Basin Ag Collaborative assists in finding individual and united solutions to promote ag sustainability through education, support, cooperation, and financial resources dedicated to the Upper Basin.

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