



Endangered Way of Life

Danger in the Species Act: applying its one-size-fits-all formula, the Endangered Species Act has created a needless crisis in Klamath. This is a law that puts people last.

As the new year begins, the future unfortunately remains bleak for many families in the Klamath Basin along the California-Oregon border. The federal government cut off farmers' irrigation last spring in order to provide more water for fish. Bankruptcy and financial ruin have hit many of the region's 1,400 farm families. Although the feds are reevaluating their policy, there's no certainty that it will be relaxed before the next growing season. A century's way of life in the Klamath Basin may be coming to an end. What's often overlooked in the debate over the Klamath crisis is the ultimate culprit: the Endangered Species

Anne M. Hayes is an attorney with Pacific Legal Foundation (www.pacificlegal.org), which represented some Klamath water users in attempts to get irrigation restored.

B Y A N N E M . H A Y E S

Act, one of the most inflexible — and, literally, inhuman — laws on the books.

Confronted with the conflicting demands in the Klamath situation, most reasonable people would probably advocate compromise. What amount of water is needed in the lake and in the river to help preserve threatened fish stocks? Where could the farmers cut back on water usage, while still maintaining economic viability? What measures can keep area wildlife refuges functional? Where else can we find water to meet these needs? And how can we construct a plan to prevent a repetition of this scenario in future years? Answers to these questions could point toward a workable accommodation. But none of these questions were ever asked — because the ESA is indifferent to such questions. It applies one-size-fits-all procedures and actions geared solely toward the protection of listed species. No other factors can be considered. Regulators must ignore the economic and other effects of their actions — including adverse environmental effects — and every other nuance of often complex situations.

Even after the Interior Department relented slightly in the late summer and allowed a small flow of irrigation water to resume, the cost of the Klamath debacle has been staggering: \$250 million in economic losses for the Klamath community; \$20 million in federal taxpayer aid for farmers; \$17 million proposed by Congress to “study” the situation; \$8 million in California aid to the farmers; and a \$500,000 loan from the state of Oregon for hard-hit farmers. Populations of ducks, geese, deer,

and other wildlife — including bald eagles — that relied on irrigation water have suffered. The Klamath region has been the scene of months of citizen activism and civil disobedience, including trespassing on federal property, a bucket brigade, bucket convoys from three states, sit-ins, rallies, and more. One would think, given this investment of time, energy, and money, that some sort of resolution could be found. But not as long as the terms are dictated by the ESA.

While few people would question the intent of this law, the fact is that it is cumbersome and misdirected. It applies the same complicated, expensive, and elaborate programs to every species issue, no matter how simple or complex it is actually to solve the problem. Since its enactment in 1973, untold billions of dollars have been spent and thousands of lawsuits have been brought, all to save the few hundreds of species that are listed as endangered or threatened. And the results are dismal: in the past quarter century, only 27 species have been removed from the threatened or endangered list. And in no case did any measure dictated by the ESA have anything to do with the removal.

A strong environmentalist lobby opposes changes in the law because in its current form it is a monkey wrench that can

shut down any productive human endeavor that they oppose. For instance, it has been effective in convincing several Klamath Falls residents to stop farming and sell out to the government. But if Americans actually want to preserve wildlife, and, furthermore, do so without destroying people's lives and livelihoods, they must demand a major overhaul of the ESA.



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Grim, Scary Tales

* One *

The Tale of the Hungry Wolves who tried to eat homes, livelihoods, and the Orangewood Children's Shelter

Everyone in Orange County knows about the fight over the future of the former El Toro Marine

Assembly Budget Committee Vice Chairman John Campbell represents California's 70th Assembly District (Irvine).

And now children, a pair of stories, one about local government, one about Sacramento, and both with the same moral: power tends to make men small

— or —

Expect little humility, fairness, moderation, or common sense from 'public servants' placed in power over us.

Base. Much less publicity has been given to the battle over the former Tustin Air Base. It is a struggle between people trying to balance competing interests for the common good and other people using race and politics to serve their own political advantage while harming almost everyone else in the pro-

BY JOHN CAMPBELL