

NARRATOR:

The Bureau of Reclamation's Klamath Project on the Oregon- California border was authorized in 1905 to drain and reclaim lakebed lands of the Lower Klamath and Tule Lakes. The ultimate goal was to reclaim the land for homesteading and agricultural use.

President Roosevelt added an additional use for some of the land when he created what is now called Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge in 1908. Twenty years later, President Coolidge followed suit and created the Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge. Both refuges are located within the boundaries of the Klamath Project and contain approximately 92,700 acres. Within the confines of the two refuges are 22,000 acres set aside for full agriculture use. The Reclamation Lease Land Program originated in 1914 on land near Tule Lake National Wildlife Refuge. By 1932, Reclamation was charged with implementing the leasing program on both refuges. Today the acreage is made available for lease through a sealed bidding process.

In the early 1960s Congress began to debate the best use for the agricultural land. The Kuchel (pronounced

Keykull) Act of 1964 placed the responsibility of administering the 22,000 acres on the Secretary of the Interior. It further stated that the current pattern of leasing was to continue with the major purpose of waterfowl management with full consideration for optimum agricultural use.

Mike Green, the Lease Land Program Manager at Reclamation's Klamath Basin Area Office is a firm believer in the program.

MIKE GREEN:
RECLAMATION

We have a handful of crops grown on the lease land. Those being small grains, potatoes onions and alfalfa. The total acreage of the crops grown amounts to about ten percent of the Klamath Project. Under the Kuchel Act Reclamation is to share 25 percent of the net revenues with the county governments that encompass the lease land areas. Currently, in 2008, three county governments shared 272 thousand dollars.

NARRATOR:

In 1976 Congress amended the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act. The amendment transferred primary management authority of the lease land from Reclamation to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The two organizations entered into a cooperative agreement

where Reclamation would continued administering the leasing program while the Fish and Wildlife service maintained responsibility for wildlife management and conservation.

Dave Mauser, Refuge Wildlife Biologist, with the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Dave Mauser:

The Lease Land Program is beneficial to all migratory waterfowl and spring migratory waterfowl in particular. The green brow is provided by alfalfa in the spring and the small grains and potatoes in fall to geese and duck. To both the hunters and the bird watchers it's public lands that are open for hunting and open for bird watching. Of course it's a favorable duck and goose hunting area to the waterfowl hunters and it does provide opportunities for bird watchers to come and see a lot of the waterfowl concentrations in fall and spring and also the bald eagles that follow the waterfowl during the fall and in the winter time also.

NARRATOR:

In addition to improving wildlife habitat and the economy, the environment profits as well. The Integrated Pest Management Plan started in 1998 and a test program

called Walking Wetlands began in 2000. Both programs are in place on the lease lands and making a positive impact.

Mike Green explains

MIKE GREEN:

Due to concerns about pesticide applications on the lease Lands it was in 1998 that the Bureau of Reclamation and The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service finalized and Integrated Pest Management Plan. In 2000 we started using a new Integrated Pest Management technique called flood fallowing which involves building a levee around the farmed area and flooding for one to four years. Then by rotating the land back into crops after that time. By flooding lots we've been able to reduce soil born pest levels which increases crop quality, reduces pesticide use, allows for organic certification and increases lease revenues. The flooding with proper management also provides high-quality habitat for wildlife and with the success of our first flooded area we decided to move or walk the water to other farmed areas on the lease lands and we changed the name to Walking Wetlands.

NARRATOR:

It's easy to see why this partnership between Reclamation and the Fish and Wildlife Service is a win-win situation for all involved. Both are dedicated to the good stewardship of

the natural resources entrusted to their care
and are committed to ensuring the best possible
environment for the Klamath Basin. With any luck, their
efforts will continue far into the future and serve as an
example of how to work together for the benefit of all.