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Help to Farmers and Ranchers Is On The Way From Drought Package

SALEM, Ore. – Today the Senate passed the \$98.725 million drought package in the Second Special Session of 2021. The money will go directly to help farmers and ranchers recover from last summer’s heatwave that scorched crops and dried wells.

“These investments are critically urgent because agriculture is a vital sector of our economy,” said Lynn Findley (R-Vale), Senate Republican Assistant Leader. “Last summer was brutal for their livelihoods. These crucial investments will help the producers bounce back and recoup some of the lost revenues they would have otherwise earned. These funds will also help the farmers and ranchers become more resilient in the face of natural disasters.”

The largest line item in the package will direct \$40 million in forgivable loans to producers and irrigators who have sustained losses to the drought. Another \$10 million will be directed to irrigation districts to ensure they will continue to provide critical services.

Part of the package will allocate \$5.75 million for domestic well assistance, including for those who had a well run dry. It is estimated that 127 wells, outside of the Klamath Basin, have gone dry.

Workers who had to miss work because of extreme weather conditions or smoke will also have access to a \$10 million fund for compensation.

The Klamath Basin, one of the hardest-hit regions in the state, will have access to over \$20 million in disaster relief funds, which includes over \$9 million to the Klamath Tribe. This money will go toward domestic well assistance to help residents recover the costs related to a well going dry and other recovery and resiliency programs.

“In the southern part of the Klamath Basin more than 250 wells have gone dry this season, partly from drought and partly from California ag-producers draining the joint use aquifer,” said Senator Dennis Linthicum (R-Klamath Falls).

“The Oregon Farm Bureau has worked closely with the Governor’s Office to develop this disaster package since early this summer,” said Mary Anne Cooper, vice-president of government affairs for the Oregon Farm Bureau. “Our producers have been hard hit by the compounding disasters of 2021, and desperately need relief to make it through the year. We appreciate the strong advocacy of the House and Senate Republican leaders in not only securing funding but ensuring that the programs developed benefit producers and are fully funded. This relief was urgently needed, and we appreciate rural Oregon’s legislators fighting hard for their constituents’ needs.”

Senate Bill 5561 and SB 892 passed the Senate by votes of 26-2 and 28-0 respectively. They will now head to the House for consideration.

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