

Fight over water allocation in Oregon

21 July 2006

The federal government is being asked to hold a summit to address how to allocate contested water supplies in the Klamath River Basin in Oregon and California.

Farmers who rely on the Klamath River for irrigation and commercial fishermen are being urged to alter their way of life to benefit endangered species, the Christian Science Monitor says.

The situation is further complicated by the treaty rights of sovereign Indian tribes that harvest dwindling supplies of suckerfish in Klamath Lake in Oregon and salmon in California.

This year, federal authorities are limiting commercial salmon fishing along 700 miles of the U.S. Pacific Coast because fish stocks are so low.

Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., has asked the departments of Interior, Commerce and Agriculture plus the White House Council on Environmental Quality, to tackle the conservation problem by holding a regional summit.

"The cost to the environment and affected farmers, ranchers, fishermen and their communities is enormous, threatening the economy of the areas and causing great despair among residents," Walden said in a letter to the Bush Administration last week.

Walden is waiting for an official response but a spokesman says early indications are favorable.

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