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Dear North Unit Irrigation District Patrons,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well. Now that NUID has shut down for the season and we have had time to catch our breath, I wanted to begin conversations about next year's irrigation season. As you know, 2021 was full of broken records. One, NUID started the storage season with the least amount of carry-over storage in Wickiup's history. Two, the June heatwave broke state records for temperature and length of constant temperature. Three, the snowpack that normally contributes to spring/summer river flows was essentially non-existent in 2021. A little good news is initial forecasts for this winter and spring have called for La Nina conditions in our area, which is expected to bring more moisture than usual. Time will tell how much rain and snow we receive, as Central Oregon is desperate for winter moisture.

Concerning next year's allotment, NUID continually tracks 2022 water supplies through the winter, but we will not have a good understanding of available supplies until February or March. While we remain hopeful that we will obtain abundant moisture this winter, NUID continues to pursue various water conservation projects and long-term solutions. Such as a pumping plant on Lake Billy Chinook and emergency drought assistance from State and Federal Sources. For the time being, I would like to discuss some of the considerations the district will need to take into account in making decisions about water deliveries during future irrigation seasons. Among other things, the district is obligated to comply with the Endangered Species Act, which means implementing the requirements of the Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP).

As one example, one of the HCP requirements is to maintain a flow of 1300 CFS at Benham Falls from July 1st through September 15th. Benham Falls is located between Sunriver and Bend on the Deschutes River, upstream of NUID's diversion in Bend. Besides flows out of Wickiup, three primary tributaries (Spring River, Little Deschutes, Fall River) contribute to the flows at Benham Falls. During wet years, there is less reliance on outflows from Wickiup to meet the flow target at Benham Falls, while during dry years, there is more reliance on outflows from Wickiup.

Thus, among the primary considerations, the NUID Board and Management must take into account for future irrigation seasons is what the allotment will be to meet HCP requirements while ensuring irrigation supplies are available from early in the season to the end. With this in mind, NUID may have to re-institute an order cap for future irrigation seasons. While not a popular solution with everyone in low water years, it is one of the few tools we have right now to extend the irrigation season. Going forward, the NUID Board and Management could decide to institute the cap at the beginning of the season, which could also allow for more flexibility on orders than we had this past irrigation season. Bunching orders would also be one approach to accessing larger amounts of water as part of a single delivery.

This is likely a worst-case scenario, but I wanted to open communications now rather than later. Many variables and much discussion contribute to making these difficult decisions. The driving force behind these difficult decisions will be mathematics. To be clear, the decision to institute an order cap for the 2022 season has not been made. It is an available tool in the event there is not ample storage in Wickiup.

I encourage all patrons to keep an eye on Wickiup storage levels throughout the winter. You can access the information on NUID's website, www.northunitid.com, at the bottom of the page. If you don't hear from me before the holidays, I wish you a wonderful Thanksgiving and a Very Merry Christmas! NUID staff will do our best to keep you updated with the latest news and events as the winter season progresses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joshua Bailey".

Joshua Bailey
General Manager