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Yancy,

Thank you for taking my call last week and for your willingness to post NUID's perspective. I do not intend to respond to your entire post, as that would be more appropriate for COID. However, I would like to address a couple of items, specifically your comments regarding NUID and the article you penned on January 21, 2023.

I would like to underscore that NUID holds a junior water right in the Deschutes Basin. Every drop of conserved water is crucial for our patrons, not only for their economic survival but also for their ability to continue producing food for the world. Nearly 60% of the world's hybrid carrot seed comes from NUID patrons, which is sufficient to feed 1 billion people annually. Additionally, last year, 5,847 acres of wheat were cultivated, yielding between 120 and 130 bushels per acre. This amount of wheat is enough to bake approximately 7,200 one-and-a-half-pound loaves of bread per acre. These are just two examples of the many crops grown by NUID patrons; overall, we cultivate over 50 different crops to help sustain the global food supply. Imagine what we could achieve if our patrons received their normal allotment of over 2 acre-feet per acre. It's essential to remember that food security is national security, and as such, every drop of water that we can conserve and keep on farm is important.

The federal government subsidizes thousands of products every year. Supporting irrigation districts is a one-time investment that will sustain food, fiber, and fuel production for more than a century, while also reducing energy consumption by creating pressurized water systems that lessen reliance on pumps. In addition, increased river flows resulting from district conservation efforts provide significant environmental and recreational benefits. Piping canals also significantly improve community safety and reduce the spread of noxious weeds.

District patrons are now in their eighth consecutive year of drought and are receiving less than their normal allotment of over 2 acre-feet of water per acre. These reduced allotments force deficit farming, affecting not only growers but also surrounding communities, which generate nearly \$136 million in economic output. These multigenerational farms want to continue producing food for our communities and the world, but they face very serious threats if basin-wide conservation efforts are not maintained.

You mentioned that NUID is required to return only 25% of the saved water instream, and you referred to the article you wrote on January 21, 2023, in which you stated, "This project remains a massive public subsidy mostly for private benefit." On December 18, 2024, NUID and other Deschutes Basin irrigation districts signed off on a memorandum entitled "Water Conservation and Protection Pathway for Irrigation Modernization Projects in the Upper Deschutes Basin." This agreement mandates that NUID place 100% of the conserved water instream for the state-funded portion of our piping projects, enforced through specific grant language tied to the completion of each district piping project. To date, we have already placed 5.3 cubic feet per second (CFS), amounting to 2,246 acre-feet of water, instream. More water will continue to be placed instream based on state matching fund requirements. Large-scale piping projects cannot be completed without the use of state matching funds, so as these projects are finalized, more

water will be allocated instream than indicated in the NUID's Environmental Assessment (EA). Based on current state funds available, we anticipate placing over two-thirds of the conserved water instream for PG1 Lateral 43, and we have already begun releasing over 25% of the conserved water generated from our efforts during the 2025 irrigation season. Bottom line, we are placing more water instream than previously indicated, and the remaining conserved water (if there is any) will be used to shore up NUID's already limited supply of water.

Additionally, according to the Deschutes Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (DBHCP), NUID is obligated to increase flows out of the Wickiup Reservoir, regardless of the conservation efforts in other districts. Therefore, tying NUID's DBHCP flow requirements to COID's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not applicable, as we are already legally mandated to provide for these elevated flows.

NUID strives to be a collaborative partner with all entities in the Basin and is committed to the health of the river, local communities, and the ecosystem. However, we also need to ensure that there is enough water to continue food production for our community, our nation, and the world. These efforts cannot be sustained without upgrading all irrigation systems to current technology standards. I believe you would agree that there is adequate water in the system to meet everyone's needs, but it requires investment from all parties to make this happen. We appreciate your collaboration and consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,

Josh Bailey
General Manager