

Link River Dam, 1938

By US Bureau of Reclamation

The Link River runs through Klamath Falls and connects Upper Klamath Lake with Lake Ewauna. One of the nation's shortest rivers, the Link River was also extremely shallow. The Klamath Indian name for the river was Yulalona, meaning "back and forth." During a strong southern wind, the waters of the Link River were blown back and forth, leaving the river bed, including the falls, partly dry.

The Link River dam, located at the southern end of Upper Klamath Lake, was built by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1921 to provide water storage for a large irrigation canal for Klamath Basin farmers. In April 2001, the U.S. District Court stopped water deliveries to farmers in the Klamath Irrigation District to preserve adequate water levels in Upper Klamath Lake and to protect the Lost River and shortnose suckers. Farmers immediately launched protests. According to John Crawford, a farmer and member of the Klamath Water Users Association, approximately 25,000 people directly, and another 25,000 people indirectly, were affected by the government's irrigation policies. Crawford argued that in addition to crop destruction, the dry irrigation canals filled with topsoil and created community health problems such as asthma and allergies. Crawford reported in May 2001 that a coalition of farmers and Klamath Basin residents would sue the federal government for \$221 million to compensate for loss of crops, indirect financial loss such as retail sales, and health problems. In August 2001, the Department of Interior agreed to release some water, but the water did not reach every farmer who needed it or was not enough to save damaged crops.

Further Reading: McArthur, Lewis L. *Oregon Geographic Names*. Portland, Oreg., 1992.

Coldwell, O.B "Beginnings of Electric Power in Oregon." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 31, 1930: 25.

Written by Robert Donnelly, © Oregon Historical Society, 2002.

Oregon History Project

<https://www.oregonhistoryproject.org/articles/historical-records/link-river-dam-1938/>