



**Friends of the Klamath County Library
Quarterly Membership Meeting Minutes
21 June 2023
at the Library and via Zoom**

The meeting was called to order by Fran McDermott, Vice President, at 14:00. FOL Board members present: Jacek Berka, Elaine Deutschman, Judith Izzo, Fran McDermott; About a dozen community members attended as well, several *via* Zoom.

Fran introduced Karl Wenner, owner of Lakeside Farms, to speak about the projects he and his wife, Ann, are undertaking on a farm along highway 97, between Cove Point residential development and the area known as Hanks Marsh. The area was drained and turned into farmland about 1935; the farm did very well during World War II, growing barley, which was in high demand, on the drained land. Due to its location along the Pacific Flyway, lots of wild fowl visited the area to eat the barley and the farm evolved into a multi-owner duck club in the 1970s which still exists today in conjunction with the farm.

The farm was very successful until restrictions on the level of phosphorus in the water returned to the lake through pumping operations to keep the land dry for barley were put in place. Additionally, irrigation constraints were established due to lack of water. The Wenners worked with multiple organizations and agencies to address these problems in order to accomplish four goals: (1) improve the water quality of the water being returned to the lake; (2) increase the efficiency of water use; (3) continue to attract water fowl in good numbers; and (4) make the farm economically sustainable.

Karl noted that the area in the Klamath Basin had historically been referred to as the Everglades of the West; it was 350,000 acres of wetlands, shallow lakes and marshes; 90% of the water fowl migrating along the Pacific Flyway came through the Basin. Pioneers settled, making use of the good land and abundant water; they began moving water around by building dikes and ditches. But by 1980, about 80% of the wetlands were gone; the railroad tracks cut off huge parts of Hanks Marsh leaving only a small marsh area. The phosphorus being dumped into the lake through farming operations caused huge algae blooms and killed off the two sucker fish species on which the Klamath tribes depended for food. Karl noted that the lake level is well above the land used for farming – several feet – so pumping is needed to use the land for farming.

So the Wenners divided the land into 5 sections. One remained a wetland with built up nesting areas into which water from the other areas was pumped. Barley is grown on 3 sections which have been pumped and the remaining section is a wetland and will remain so for 3 years which will then be drained for growing organic barley. Three months after water was added to the two wetland sections, ducks and geese arrived in the thousands. The question was whether holding the water in these wetlands before pumping it back into the lake would reduce the phosphorus content to meet regulations. Expectations were a 4 to 5 year period to hold that water but measurements discovered that it took only a year before that water could be returned to the lake with appropriate phosphorus levels. So the goals originally set are being met: clean water returned to the lake, wild fowl are visiting the farm in good numbers and the farm is producing barley and thus is economically sustainable on the available water.

The meeting was opened to questions from attendees. Asked if other farmers are trying this system, Karl noted one farm across Highway 97 is beginning this method as well. Karl noted that existing duck clubs are beginning to use this method of increasing wild fowl but there are some places which can't create the wetlands needed in dry years. Peat forms, dries and blows away if water isn't available – not a desirable situation.

Following Karl's presentation, a short business meeting for members was held. The latest financial statement summary was displayed; there were no questions. Additionally, members of the Friends of the Library board were elected from the slate provided by the nominating committee with the addition of a nomination from the floor. Board members for the upcoming year will be: Jacek Berka, Gail Brock, Elaine Deutschman, Dorothy Hudson, Judith Izzo, Fran McDermott, Dona Nelson, Betty Shaw and Mickie Vandenburg.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 14:50

Respectfully submitted,
Elaine Deutschman, Secretary
Friends of the Klamath County Library