

Klamath Basin Pact signed by Schwarzenegger and Kulongoski

Klamath Basin water-sharing agreement resolves 100-year struggle about fish and farms

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California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger brought star power to the Capitol on Thursday when he joined Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski and U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar to sign agreements for the nation's largest-ever dam-removal project.

They and leaders of PacifiCorp, three tribes, environmental and fishing groups signed two agreements.

One lays out a plan for removal by 2020 of four hydroelectric dams PacifiCorp owns on the Klamath River, which flows through Southern Oregon and Northern California. The second describes how water will be shared between farms and fish and how the basin's ecological balance will be restored.

"The two agreements we are signing do not completely put to rest this decades-old conflict," Kulongoski said to the assembled crowd. "Everyone who has been involved with the agreements knows that there is much work still to be done."

But it was Schwarzenegger, a former actor, who drew hundreds of people to a Capitol rotunda that has seen more than its share of celebrities.

"To me, he's more than another governor — he's 'Conan the Barbarian,'" said Rep. Vicki Berger, R-Salem, who waited with other legislators from both parties — and lots of other people — to get a glimpse of and hear a few words from the former actor.

His was a much higher-profile appearance than in this same month 43 years ago, when then-California Gov. Ronald Reagan — a former actor and a future president — met here with then Oregon Gov. Tom McCall.

Not everyone was impressed this time, though.

House Speaker Dave Hunt, D-Gladstone, told his daughter, Emily, 10, that Schwarzenegger would visit the Capitol the same day as her fifth-grade class.

"She said, 'Who's Arnold Schwarzenegger?'" Hunt said.

Although Kulongoski's office announced the ceremony last week, Schwarzenegger's appearance was disclosed only about a day in advance. He flew to Salem for the ceremony, which lasted about an hour, and left immediately afterward.

A few good lines

Blending some of his best movie lines into his speech, Schwarzenegger didn't disappoint the crowd. He paraphrased one of his famous lines from his 1991 movie "Terminator 2."

"It was 15 months ago that we were all promising each other we are going to do everything we can to get through our differences and finalize an agreement to tear down those dams — to say 'hasta la vista' to the dams and restore the majesty of the Klamath River," he said.

The actual line was "hasta la vista, baby."

He also used a line from the original 1984 "Terminator" movie, and did not omit any words.

"I can see the salmon fishery screaming, 'I'll be back,' " he said.

He said California would do its part to raise the \$250 million to carry out its share of the agreement. The money is contained in an \$11 billion bond issue for water projects awaiting a statewide election on Nov. 2. Oregon's share will come from \$200 million that Pacific Power will collect from ratepayers during the next decade; the federal government will contribute the other \$1 billion.

"Let me tell you, this was not an easy lift," said the former body-builder and Mr. Olympia, whose weight-lifting career was portrayed in the 1977 documentary "Pumping Iron."

"This was such a big lift that even I, who comes from a lifting background, had to ask for help."

Schwarzenegger is a Republican who won election in 2003, at the same time his Democratic predecessor was recalled, and is completing his second and final term this year.

He has had more than his share of differences with both the majority Democrats and minority Republicans in the California Legislature. His popularity is at a low point.

Kind words

He had kind words for Kulongoski, a Democrat whom Schwarzenegger invited last fall to take part in a climate-change conference in Los Angeles — and not just for show.

"He has been a great partner with us in California on the Western Climate Initiative and our commitment to reduce greenhouse gases," he said.

Kulongoski said the two states have joined to promote energy-efficient buildings, low-carbon fuels, electric and alternative-fuel cars, and marine reserves.

After the ceremony, Schwarzenegger said states and regions have to take the lead in dealing with greenhouse-gas reductions, given that legislation has stalled in the U.S. Senate and an agreement has not been reached among nations.

"This is why I think Gov. Kulongoski, myself and (governors in) other Western states have led the way to inspire other states in the United States and to do what traditionally happens in the United States," he said.

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