

Water deal signed



H&N photo by Ty Beaver
California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger shakes hands with Jeff Mitchell, Klamath Tribes council member as U.S Interior Secretary Ken Salazar looks on.

Governors, interior secretary part of ceremony at Oregon Capitol

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SALEM — More than 500 people filled the rotunda of the Oregon State Capitol Thursday to watch 30 stakeholders sign a final draft of the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement and a related Klamath River dam removal agreement.

California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger told onlookers during the hour-long ceremony that getting to this point wasn't an easy task.

"It was such a big lift that even I, from a lifting background, had to ask for help," Schwarzenegger said, gesturing toward Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski and U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar.

The restoration agreement, which seeks to resolve water conflicts in the Klamath River Basin, would fund habitat restoration and stabilize irrigator power rates and water supplies. The related dam removal agreement would remove four Klamath River dams to improve fish passage and restore salmon runs.

The cost to implement both documents is estimated at \$1.5 billion — \$500 million for dam removal and \$1 billion for the restoration agreement. The cost would be over 10 years.

The \$1 billion would come from federal coffers and the \$500 million from the states of

Oregon and California.

The ceremonial signing Thursday was just one step.

Congress must pass legislation and provide funding to implement both agreements and studies have to be conducted on dam removal. There also are loose ends within the agreements to tie up, officials said.

“We’re long past the beginning, and we won’t stop until we finish,” Kulongoski said.



LEFT: From left, Gov. Ted Kulongoski, Dr. Jane Lubchenco, administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar walk into the Capitol’s rotunda Thursday.

The agreement represent years of negotiations between three dozen or so stakeholder groups representing tribal, irrigation, fishery and conservation interests.

Kulongoski, Salazar and other officials said those stakeholders represented the best of the Basin by being able to move forward and come to a compromise.

“We celebrate today what is a watershed decision to resolve one of the most intractable water wars,” Salazar said.

Greg Abel, president of PacifiCorp Energy, said it was the leadership of the governors and Salazar that allowed the agreements to move forward.

He also said the stakeholders were willing to work with his company to find a balance between everyone’s needs while providing a fair deal for PacifiCorp’s customers.

“In the end, they delivered fairness,” he said.

Luther Horsley, president of Klamath Water Users Association, and Perry Chocktoot, a member of the Klamath Tribal Council, were among Klamath Basin stakeholders in Salem for the ceremony.

Horsley said afterward he was relieved knowing the Basin could move forward and have a future with irrigated agriculture.

Chocktoot said he looked forward to his children and grandchildren being able to carry on their heritage as fishermen.

They agreed there was still work to do.

“This can’t just be history, we have to keep talking,” Horsley said.



California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger watches as Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski signs the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement at the Oregon Capitol Thursday.

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