

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION, GOVERNORS, AND KLAMATH COMMUNITIES SIGN PACT TO RESTORE RIVER AND LOCAL ECONOMIES

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NOTE: B-roll and photos available. Contact Susan Laarman, 503 341-3799

Karuk Tribe · Klamath Tribes of Oregon · Yurok Tribe
American Rivers · Trout Unlimited · California Trout
Salmon River Restoration Council · Natural Heritage Institute
Northern CA Council of the Federation of Fly Fishers · Institute for Fisheries Resources
Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations
Klamath Water Users Association · Upper Klamath Water Users Association
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- Fisheries recovery at center of effort to strengthen local economies
- Effective solutions replace emergency expenditures and endless litigation

Salem, OR – Today – for the first time ever – there is a viable, legally binding agreement to restore and protect the ecosystem, cultures, and local economies of the Klamath Basin, said supporters of two historic agreements that settle long-standing differences in the area.

Members of the broad-based coalition that crafted the agreements, and their growing roster of supporters, gathered today in Salem at a signing ceremony together with the Governors of Oregon and California, the Secretary of the Interior, and other high ranking Obama administration officials. The agreements have been five years in the making and by signing today, stakeholders make a fifty-year commitment to work

together to restore the Klamath Basin's resources and communities.

The settlement agreements include the comprehensive Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement (KBRA) that addresses environmental and economic issues in the Basin, and a sister agreement, the Klamath Hydropower Settlement Agreement (KHSA), which outlines a rigorous process for removing four Klamath River dams.

"Restoring the Klamath River fisheries from source to sea is a central focus of this restoration effort. Ours is the only practical plan to address removal of four dams necessary for fish recovery. And it creates a foundation for peace in our conflict-torn Basin by defining water sharing among competing, and growing, demands," said Jeff Mitchell, Councilman and lead negotiator for the Klamath Tribes.

Optimism marked the day as supporters urged citizens to "give change a chance" and support this opportunity to work together. That message also went out to elected officials whose support Klamath leaders seek as they now begin work to secure necessary legislation in Congress.

Conservation groups emphasized that this plan demonstrates that environmental restoration can also be good for local economies. Klamath River tribes said that for the first time in 100 years there is hope to bring back some of the West Coast's largest salmon runs, which will provide economic opportunity and restore vital cultural assets. Farmers and ranchers said that they want to create more reliable conditions for agriculture so their children can continue to live and work in the Basin.

"Change is happening and we invite people to join us," declared Thomas O'Rourke, Chairman of the Yurok Tribe. "Legislation will take some time, but former adversaries are already working together to manage the Basin, take care of our people, and craft a shared future. That's what we're celebrating here today."

This plan includes the largest dam removal project in history. The coalition's conservation organizations (which together have more dam removal experience than any groups in America) emphasized that the magnitude of the project requires careful analysis to confirm that removal, which is slated for 2020, is in the public interest.

"Dam removal gets a lot of attention but removal alone is not enough to restore the many endangered fisheries to self sustaining and harvestable levels. Habitat restoration and improved water flows at key times of year are also critical," said Steve Rothert, California Director for American Rivers.

Chuck Bonham, CA Director for Trout Unlimited, added, "We all recognize that we must work as partners with the agricultural community and private landowners to make fisheries recovery possible. We want the fish welcomed home."

The region's important wildlife refuges and the Pacific Flyway also benefit from the KBRA. When implemented, the KBRA will provide a certain and predictable supply of

water to the Tule Lake and Lower Klamath Wildlife Refuges. Extensive habitat improvements to area wetlands and incentives for farmers to retain flooded areas for waterfowl will also benefit migratory birds.

Settlement supporters now turn their attention to Washington, DC where they will seek funds to invest in Klamath communities and implement the comprehensive restoration plan. Restoration measures will be accompanied by financial investments to diversify agricultural, tribal and county economies, including extensive renewable energy development.

“From the beginning, our shared premise for negotiation was that wildlife restoration without measures to stabilize local economies was not going to bring the long-term sustainability and well-being our communities need,” said Luther Horsley, President of the Klamath Water Users Association, which represents farmers in the federal Klamath Reclamation Project.

Supporters urged the public to know the facts about the cost of restoration. They said that in the past decade, the federal government has spent an average of \$50 million each year on measures that too often only address symptoms of the Basin’s problems. The KBRA will apply that amount to carefully coordinated restoration and match it over ten years to fix root causes of problems.

“The Klamath Basin has lurched from crisis to crisis, and Congress has had to provide disaster assistance each time,” said Glen Spain of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations, representing commercial fishing communities. “These agreements are a far better use of taxpayer money because they invest in real and permanent solutions.”

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Editor’s note: for more information about the Klamath Agreements, see:
<http://www.edsheets.com/Klamathdocs.html> - (full text of Agreements and summaries)
<http://www.americanrivers.org/our-work/restoring-rivers/dams/projects/restoring-klamath-river.html>
- (extensive compilation of reports and analyses)
<http://www.klamathrestoration.org> - (tribal perspectives on Basin agreements)
<http://kwua.org> & <http://ukwua.com> - (agricultural perspectives on Basin agreements)

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