

## 2001 water crisis a learning experience

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Bob Gasser says he remembers, when the federal government shut off the Klamath Basin's irrigation water in 2001, that many of those impacted said they were going to change this nation's environmental laws.

Federal authorities shut off the water because they believed fish protected by the Endangered Species Act were in danger. Angry irrigators and other Basin residents, Gasser included, were going to show how flawed the law was.

"We thought we could change the ESA; we really thought we could," he said.

Gasser said he and most others learned the hard way it can't be. It's too big of an issue for the Klamath Basin to pursue alone.

Instead, people learned they needed to work together, and that sparked the years of negotiating that produced the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement and related hydropower agreement, he said.

The KBRA isn't going to be perfect, Gasser said, but if it meets most of the needs of irrigators in the Basin, it will mean they are better off.

He acknowledged that some still think they were right about the Endangered Species Act, especially after authorities determined the 2001 shutoff was unjustified. But being right won't make people better off.

"I had a good friend who lost 90 percent of his ranch," Gasser said. "When they had that headline (that the shutoff was unjustified), that didn't help him."



Bob Gasser, co-owner of Basin Fertilizer & Chemicals, talks near the A Canal Wednesday about the 2001 water shutoff and how that event led to the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement. H&N photo by Ty Beaver

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