

# **Commentary: Don't turn agriculture into liberal vs. conservative issue**

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Guest writer

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The Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement/Basin water issue is not a Democrat, Republican, Independent, conservative or liberal issue. Farmers and ranchers are Democrats, Republicans, Independents, pro political, or not political at all.

It is about agriculture in the Klamath Basin. There is another "label" and this is what I consider myself to be: pro agriculture.

Being pro agriculture means that I am pro-farmer, pro-rancher, pro business, pro jobs, and pro Klamath Basin.

Agriculture in this Basin is one of the foundations which brings \$300 million into our economy.

We all remember 2001. The Upper Basin ranchers and farmers did not have their water shut off. The ranchers and farmers on the Klamath Reclamation Project did.

In 2010 we face a chance of the same scenario because of drought. The Upper Basin people will not have water shut off. They may have less water due to drought, but the water won't be shut off.

The Project, on the other hand, faces the potential of shutoff or very little water.

I have stated from the very beginning that I was not for dam removal. Yet, as I read the KBRA, I realized that this document, as imperfect as it is, would be the beginning of bringing more stabilization to our agricultural community.

This gives us place at the table

Our vote for or against the agreement was not going to keep it from going forward. But, my yes vote would be pro agriculture and pro Klamath Basin in the fact that we would have a place at the table to be a part of the decisions that will affect Klamath County.

I could not "throw out the baby with the bathwater" or "throw the baby over the dams" just to make a statement about dam removal.

If the KBRA were in place today, the Project irrigators would have a better chance of 330,000 acre-feet instead of around 150,000 acre-feet. If we have no agriculture we have fewer jobs, fewer businesses, fewer schools, and very little chance of any businesses wanting to relocate here. We would not be in a position to have the veterans home, manufacturing, retail, or large box stores looking at Klamath County.

Everyone keeps asking for Costco, chain restaurants, and yet, if agriculture were negatively affected by not having sustainable water, we would not be able to attract these businesses.

I attended a water conference several months ago. I learned what a liberal label really looked like.

The speaker was disturbed at how many acre-feet of water it took to produce several cuttings of alfalfa, compared to the amount of water it would take to manufacture computer chips. What? Did the speaker not realize that alfalfa feeds the steer that feed people, provided jobs for the growers and producers of food, to the checkout person at the grocery store? Oh, that's right; we can get our food from China.

Please quit using labels that have nothing to do with agriculture.

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