

Straddling the water shutoff line

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H&N photo by Andrew Mariman
Karl Scronce, an off-Project farmer and proponent of dam removal, stands near where the bucket brigade began in 2001. As a participant in the event that brought water from Lake Ewauna to the A Canal, Scronce believes the KBRA is in the best interest of the Basin.

Karl Scronce was straddling a line in 2001.

He was both an off-Project irrigator with land above Upper Klamath Lake and an on-Project irrigator with 500 acres in the Bureau of Reclamation's Klamath Project.

"I just had a disbelief that they would ever shut the water off, and they did shut the water off," he said.

It was a year of contention, of anguish, of fighting. Scronce said he survived the year in pretty good shape financially, having few equipment payments, some land that was still irrigable, and the ability to let go of two full-time employees and do the work himself.

"I had some really good crop insurance," he said. "Financially, I didn't have a terrible year." But, the loss of markets had a lasting impact, he said.

"It set some of our precious markets back. You make relationships to get those markets built up. Then you can't produce the product," he said.

Scronce said he kept his head down when he saw letters to the editor about the land next to the highway that was being irrigated.

"You just recognized how unfair it was. At that time, I didn't totally understand why off-Project wasn't subject to the same rules," he said. Since then, he's come to understand the impact of water adjudication, he said. "I felt we were very vulnerable in the off-Project. So I participated in the Bucket Brigade."

Scronce said the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement released in draft form earlier this week is vitally important to furthering the goals of the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement.

“I’m participating in (KBRA talks) in the hopes of reaching an acceptable agreement,” he said. “I’m concerned about power rates and water available and some protections from regulatory issues concerning the environment.”

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