

## What if? Leaders look ahead

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*Herald and News reporters talked to a variety of community members and leaders about the dam removal agreement and the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreements. We asked them to address these questions:*

From your point of view, what's most important about a dam removal agreement?

If the dam removal agreement and KBRA come to pass, what will we see that will be different in 10, 20, 40 years?

If the agreements are turned down, how will issues develop locally?

How would you suggest explaining the proposals so that readers, whether they live in rural areas or the middle of urban centers, grasp the impact?



**Todd Kellstrom, Klamath Falls mayor**

It's a "collaboration of interests that achieves a collective resolution," he said.

"To me, we were either going to pay a good deal of money for fish restoration, or we were going to pay a good deal of money for the removal and higher power rates. We were going to pay no matter what, and I don't know whether people really understood that."

"Although I'm in support of what these people have done, it kind of flies in the face of the renewable energy push that we're doing. I would hope in the future that the loss of renewable energy for the sake of the fish will be reconciled."

He said he sees problems — some say the sediments built up behind dams could destroy the fish beds for several years. "It's been a very contentious issue and, unfortunately, the truth has been marred by those with special interests. My hope is that this agreement is for the best for the most people."

Without an agreement, he says, he predicts more legal battles.

"I would predict more litigation issues, maybe endless litigation issues, with regards to the fish, which will result in a higher cost without any legitimate gain."

Constituents should understand that there's been a meeting of cultures. "The division between the Tribes and agriculture community has come together with an agreement. We're all members of the community and I am happy to see they have all come together again."

He said everyone will also be affected by changes in power rates.



**Bill Adams,  
Klamath Falls City Council**

"I think it's going to be the beginning of a big change for a lot of things in the Klamath Basin, particularly regarding water issues, but not just water issues. I think the majority of the community was opposed to dam removal and felt that taking the dams out was going to be detrimental to our community."

He said he expects that state residents will spend more for electricity.

"I suspect that is inevitable anyway we look at it. I think time is the only thing that is going to tell for sure. Project irrigators have really looked after themselves and I'm not sure the off-project irrigators have been looked after in the whole agreement."

"I think without the agreement, the (KBRA) is not going to happen because the Tribes want to see the dams out. I suspect it won't help the fish."

"For one of my constituents, either in the city or in my ward, the big thing they are looking at is the power rates and the fact that we, as ratepayers, are forced to pay for the removal of the dams. I believe probably most of the people in our community feel hydropower is an environmentally-friendly type of power because it is a renewable resource as opposed to coal or natural gas."



**Trey Senn, Klamath County Economic Development Association executive director**

Though it could still be decades before dams come down, Senn said, this is the beginning of the end.

“From the point of view of not having to argue about it for another 50 years, it’s probably a good thing that the feds, the state and Pacific Power have agreed on everything.”

“From my point of view, one of the more interesting things is going to be what is Klamath, and other counties going to do with these funds that are going to come to the area and what is our vision for the future? We’ve got to start thinking about, ‘What is our vision?’ ”

Without the agreement, more of the same, he said. “People bickering, lawsuits, that kind of stuff.”

Senn said that he thinks that people are deciding about dams all over the country.

“I don’t know if the average person is going to be delighted if the river goes back to the way it was. I don’t think they’ll be terribly impacted one way or the other with this situation unless they are passionately for or against it. It’s local, but it wasn’t anything any of us were really going to be able to say yes or no to; this was bigger than cities and counties, this was states and presidents.”



**Mike Orcutt, director of Hoopa Tribal fisheries**

“On one hand the agreement is very significant and positive because a group of 28 diverse interests — tribes, irrigators, PacifiCorp, conservationists and others — came together to hash out a deal.”

On the other hand, he said the agreement to decide in 2012 whether or not to remove the dams isn't all that significant. "The carrot of dam removal is being dangled in the public's face. Folks are led to believe this is the route to get there, but in reality, dam removal isn't part of the terms of agreement. A lot is yet to be decided." "Regardless of what happens with the agreement, we will continue to work toward restoration of the Trinity River. Our goal is to see the Trinity River fishery restored to pre-dam levels. Our people have lived on the Trinity River for thousands of years. It continues to be the largest most salmon-producing tributary to the Klamath, producing over half of the Chinook runs that bless the Klamath River."

"There are too many 'off ramps' afforded to PacifiCorp that could further postpone dam removal. If the agreement fails, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission would step back in to finish their job of determining whether or not the dams are fit for relicensing."

Orcutt said it's a historical moment that such diverse groups decided the fate of four dams on the Klamath River. "But we don't have another decade to wait for shaky dam removal deals to play out. The dams are obsolete and everybody agrees they need to come down. This deal makes it possible for the federal government to put the needs of a power company above your way of life, culture and inherent rights. The deal has serious funding problems that California and Oregon residents will be asked to solve.

"Although we wish it did, this deal does NOT say the dams are coming down. It says the feds will 'think about it.' "



**Jeff Mitchell, Klamath tribal councilman**

"It's a big step forward. It's one more hurdle we've just come over as a community."

The dam removal agreement will bring full restoration of the Klamath River watershed, Mitchell said. That will bring salmon to the upper reaches of the river and more certainty for all the communities in the watershed, yielding better economies.

"Down the road, we hope to be fishing."

"If the dams aren't removed, we'll probably be back at square one."

Being back where the community was before work on the KBRA began probably means litigation would again be used by various interests to resolve the Basin's problems.

"We've been for so long tied up in litigation, which ultimately lead to uncertain resources that have been declining. All those things lead to an unfortunate situation. Now we can head somewhere better."



**Luther Horsley, Klamath Water Users Association president**

“It moves the KBRA forward. Now we can focus on the restoration agreement.”

Horsley said that with the dam removal agreement and the KBRA in place, irrigated agriculture should be able to continue in the Basin without being in conflict with the Endangered Species Act.

“That’s what the KBRA is, a way for us to keep operating and abide by the laws of the United States.”

Horsley said he hopes the Basin wouldn’t return to the contentious days of the past, when litigation was the primary means of addressing the region’s issues. Rather, he would want to see the collaboration built by those who worked on the KBRA to continue.

The significance of the two agreements goes back to irrigators’ need to follow federal laws, Horsley said, and that is what is best for the entire Basin.

“This is the best approach we’ve been able to come to.”



**Tom Mallams, Klamath Off-Project Water Users**

The dam removal agreement doesn’t provide off-Project irrigators any assurances or protections, and it has no teeth for enforcing itself, he said. “Yet, other stakeholders want everyone to sign onto it.”

“I look at it as a big media blitz trying to spin it in a positive way.”

“We don’t think it’s going to happen, at least we hope not, or if it does that it’s changed.”

The dam removal agreement has the potential to be great for the Basin, but he said it’s not equitable in its current form, and neither is the KBRA, and that means it just spells disaster for everyone.

“I think they could still go back to the table, not necessarily start over.”

The current format of the two agreements benefits a few groups while hurting others, he says, and people need to be more open minded toward the concerns of all involved.

“You can always start over and fix something, but once it’s in place, you’re done.”

It has the potential to do a lot of good for the community, he said, but also has the potential to destroy it.

“I can’t even fathom what would happen if irrigated agriculture here disappeared.”



**Bill Garrard, Oregon state representative**

He said he didn’t appreciate the secretive nature of the discussions about dam removal, but the diversity of the groups involved in those discussions reflect the work they’ve done to resolve the Basin’s problems.

“I think that’s very, very admirable and I think that speaks well of the Basin.”

The Endangered Species Act isn’t likely to change in the coming years and will still be in effect. As a result, he said he couldn’t know for certain what will come to pass decades down the road.

“I think there’s always going to be a lot of extreme danger.”

Stakeholders should already be open to the possibility that the agreements will not be implemented and that they’re going to have to continue to collaborate to find solutions to the Basin’s problems .

“We have to start over and look for alternatives.”

The agreements will have a variety of impacts on the economies of the Basin, most notably agriculture.

“Agriculture is a very important part of the Basin and it may indeed end up preserving agriculture.”

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