

Dam removal agreement

Stakeholders offer insight into dam removal agreement

By TY BEAVER
H&N Staff Writer
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Spokesmen representing the state, PacifiCorp, irrigators, tribes and environmentalists met Wednesday with the Herald and News to explain and promote the Klamath Hydroelectric Settlement Agreement.

Q: If you were writing an editorial about the dam removal agreement, what would you tell readers?

Dean Brockbank

He would ask one question: What are the alternatives to the dam removal agreement?

"Is (the alternative) decades more of fighting and disruption and, at times, poor allocation of resources, or is it putting minds and heads together to try and solve problems in a civil way?" he asked.

PacifiCorp's primary interest is what is in the best interest of its customers. Only the alternative that provides the most certainty, fewest risks and lowest power costs for customers is what the company should pursue.

"That's why we're behind this effort 100 percent and we're behind the linkage to the Basin Restoration Agreement 100 percent because we understand that a collaborative approach, where uncertainties are identified and we try to fix them up front, is preferable to decades more of litigation and infighting and other problems we've all faced in the Basin," he said.

(Brockbank is vice president and general counsel of PacifiCorp Energy.)

Mike Carrier

The governor wants the same things that all stakeholders who worked on the hydro agreement and the related Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement want: certainty about the future.

Without certainty, the region will continue to have anxiety, which damages the economy but also the vitality of the people who live in the Basin. Carrier said it's possible the agreements will change in the coming 10 years, but the stakeholders now have a core to move forward on.

"The important thing is to keep our eye on the overall objective that we all share, which is bringing a higher level of certainty on these complex issues to the community in a way that creates sustainability," he said.

(Carrier is natural resources policy adviser to Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski.)

Greg Addington

If you want to be opposed to something, Addington said, the dam removal agreement is a "target rich environment." Opponents can pick it apart for a variety of reasons and many in Klamath County have political reasons for opposing dam removal. Most people have a hard time wanting to support the removal of hydroelectric projects.

"It's hard. It's hard for my guys," he said of irrigators.

But it's been a worthwhile process, Addington said. He defended how stakeholders committed themselves to working together to hammering out agreements. He said he understood people harboring suspicions of the agreement, since talks were conducted behind closed doors, but that the delicate nature of the topics could have led to more contention if the agreement was released too soon. And now, it's all on the table.

The resulting dam removal agreement and KBRA will be good for everyone.

"I don't see who the loser is," he said.

(Addington is executive director of Klamath Water Users Association.)

Craig Tucker

He called for public officials at all levels, especially local officials, to get behind the dam removal agreement. He noted that it's not a matter of partisanship: the agreement was crafted through two very different White House administrations, without too much change, showing it is a common sense solution.

He said that, when it came to politics, negotiators tried to fashion a nonpartisan agreement.

Tucker said the stakeholders represent a "radical center" of people who chose to set aside their personal ideologies to resolve the Basin's issues.

"There's nothing radical in the Klamath about being extremist," he said. "What's radical in the Klamath is coming together and crossing the aisle and solving problems."

(Tucker is Klamath campaign coordinator for the Karuk Tribe of California)

Brian Barr

The agreement isn't perfect, but the group of people working to find a solution is larger than it was before, and they are all able to live with the results of their work.

"I'm not naïve enough to think there's still not a 'them,' " he said, but "the circle around the people calling themselves 'us' has grown."

Having formerly worked for PacifiCorp, he acknowledged the difficulty in reaching a decision to remove dams, but said it was not a whimsical notion on the part of the stakeholders.

(Barr is habitat restoration project manager with the National Center for Conservation Science and Policy.)

James Honey

Patience; possibility; public.

"Patience," he said, because the Basin's issues were 150 years in the making and stakeholders spent just a few years working to resolve them.

"Possibility" because PacifiCorp and the conservation and tribal communities could reach an agreement. So anything is possible.

"Public" because after years during which negotiations needed to be conducted privately, everything now is available. Honey said he is exited because now the public and the involved governments, agencies and groups begin their reviews of the agreement.

"I think they're going to show these things stand up, that people were in back rooms for years not because they were hiding things but because they were trying to come up with a solution that would withstand the scrutiny of science," he said.

(Honey is program director with Sustainable Northwest.)

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