

It's time for irrigators to choose: Self-determination or conflict?

Agreement provides self-determination for water and power and regulatory assurances



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Guest writer

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The Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement is now a public document. The time has arrived to choose to participate in the programs, obligations, and benefits of the agreement, or not.

The KBRA is not a menu of actions to pick and choose, it is a package that you can choose to participate in, or not.

The KBRA is a program of self determination for water, power, and regulatory assurances. Parties can choose to participate in, and control the process, or parties can choose not to participate and let bureaucracies, litigation, and politics determine their fates.

Irrigators can choose to participate in a program that will provide them with a means to achieve affordable power for pumping, or they can choose to pay full “tariff” rates.

Irrigators can choose to build habitat and general conservation plans to address Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act compliance. Or Irrigators can take no action and live with the consequences as they litigate their lives and resources away.

Irrigators can choose to work within the Oregon adjudication and resolve water rights contests with their neighbors and Tribes by negotiation and settlement. Or irrigators can elect to give all control to judicial process and litigate their lives and resources away.

Irrigators can choose to participate in a program designed to give either assurance of water supply, or economic compensation to all classes of water claims, or contracts, during times of shortages. Or irrigators can choose to remain perpetually vulnerable to call by adjudicated senior water rights or contractual call without compensation.

We can choose to work with Tribes to resolve fisheries problems and create community economic opportunities, or we can choose to spend more generations of resources in servicing fear and prejudice.

The status quo is not one of our choices — change is here. Special contract power rates are gone, whether dams are in or out. Salmon will be reintroduced above Iron Gate Dam and into the Upper Basin, with the obligation to address habitat needs, whether dams are in or out.

The adjudication will happen and junior water rights will be exposed to calls. The Endangered Species Act, tribal rights and trust responsibilities, and the Clean Water Act

are not going away. We can choose to manage these changes, or we can choose to fight their inevitability.

There will be a fire storm of information and misinformation regarding elements of the KBRA. We can choose to believe fear and misrepresentations, or we can choose to get the facts. We can choose to contact and support folks who have built a plan for all to see and benefit from, or we can choose to follow those without solutions.

We can choose to lift each other up and build assurances together, or we can tear down the KBRA and wallow in conflict forever. Choose.

About the author:

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