

Agreement in Principle to resolve Klamath Basin Resource Issues

Senator, I am here batting cleanup when all the heavy hitters have already ventured to the podium. So, I'll try and keep with the tone. As they say "everything has been said but not everyone has said it" and I could hardly add to the eloquence and the thanks that has been given today.

It's just an honor and pleasure to be here representing Secretary Jewell and the Department of the Interior celebrating the progress representing by the agreement and principle and obviously wanting to confirm our on-going commitment as you continue your collaborative efforts in the Klamath Basin and we're going to be here with you at the Department of the Interior to kind of take today's progress and move it towards the finish line.

Obviously, I want to add from a federal perspective, our thanks to Governor Kitzhaber, Senator Wyden, Senator Merkley for your leadership and bringing folks together for pursuing this goal of expanding the collaborative efforts here in the Basin. Chairman Gentry, I know these have been difficult discussions all along for the Klamath Tribes but your leadership creativity, the Tribes have bought to these discussions and obviously everybody in the Klamath Task Force has put in countless hours, and efforts, and energy and working through difficult problems deserve everybody's thanks and a hardy congratulations, obviously.

But I do have to take out, and once again, make a special note, of a couple of folks who really been driving the process. I don't think it is any coincidence that Richard Whitman and John Bezdeck are sitting there together; I think they are joined at the hip.

I mean really, I know that there is countless of other folks who have really been there on a daily weekly basis moving this forward and I just have to say, it is well worth the effort, obviously as we come here today.

This whole process started, as Chairman Wyden mentioned, bringing folks together back in June for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. That was amazing as the outer ball who was called during that hearing that there was that ongoing commitment to try and resolve additional issues that we talked about during the hearing. In the midst of the tensions that were on-going given the priority administration of water rights that were occurring at the time, that was simply amazing and a testament to the leadership in the room.

But I go to say, I've had various different rolls here over the last decade plus. I've been a federal employee running the Indian Water Rights office in the Clinton administration, on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee staff and now as the Commissioner of the Bureau of

Reclamation. I've spent a lot of time on the Klamath Basin over the last decade. That collaboration, that commitment to problem solving is not a surprise to me. I think that has been the story for the Klamath Basin over the last decade. As you work through difficult issues obviously, in 2001 and 2002, and have moved towards a very different reality and I think there is just an increasing commitment to end the cycle of crisis going on in this basin and I think there is recognition that water shutoffs, the fishery closures, the fish die offs, bird die offs in the refuges, the impact to tribal cultures and impact to just every family in the basin, that just simply needs to end. We are taking a big step forward today towards ending that cycle and once again, it is a pleasure to be here.

The Agreement in Principle coupled with the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement and Klamath Hydropower Settlement Agreement, I think they have united a whole group of stakeholders here today that I think is the mix of people that we need to have to move those collective settlement agreements forward and furthering the interests of all stakeholders in the basin. Obviously, to have a sustainable solution, you've got to have it driven at the local level, and you have to have a buy-in from folks at the local level and I think with these three agreements now in place, we are in the position to do that and I think it just, once again, as John Bezdeck has often quoted to me and I want to quote him, "it's a recognition by all that's increasing a number of parties in the basin that we can't take care of ourselves if we fail to take care of our neighbors." I think that is a lesson that certainly, in my capacity as Reclamation Commissioner, takes the Klamath Basin to a lot of other basins that exists across the West.

So overall, I recognize that there is a lot of work left to do towards moving this forward. Fortunately, some of that work has to be done in Washington DC. Fortunately, you have an absolutely superb and well positioned congressional delegation led by Chairman Wyden and Senator Merkley. I'm here to just confirm, once again, that we are committed to working hand-in-hand with your delegation, moving these agreements forward and just simply trying to match the efforts that you all put into this basin.

So at the end of the day, our goal is the same as yours. We want to end conflict. We want to increase certainty and reliability for all water users, whether they be in agricultural sector, whether they be the environmental needs in the improvements in fishery that we need overall and for all other interests throughout the basin and basically we want to help you build that strong foundation for an economy so that you can get on with life into a much brighter future here in the Klamath Basin.

Once again, it's an honor and pleasure. It's a beautiful day. I always get nervous when it's a beautiful day. I'm doing my job at the Bureau of Reclamation, but it is probably fitting today because it is a bright future. Thank you very much.