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Oregon: County Seeks to Back Out of Water Deal

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Klamath County Board of Commissioners voted Tuesday to withdraw from an agreement that lays out how to share scarce water between fish and farms, control power costs for irrigators, and restore broken down ecosystems. Two other signatories of the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement, the Karuk Tribe and the Klamath Water Users Association, say the county cannot pull out because the agreement is a binding contract that was just renewed for two more years. Greg Addington, executive director of the Klamath Water Users Association, added that the county should bring its complaints about the restoration agreement to the table, where the 41 other groups that have signed it will give them serious consideration. Members of the previous commission signed the agreement and voted to renew it before leaving office last year. Newly elected members of the commission campaigned on a platform of getting the county out of the agreements, expressing reservations about removing dams, the impacts on the county's economy and water storage. The county has been locked in a battle for decades over sharing water between farms and endangered salmon and sucker fish. Irrigation was shut down in 2001 to give the fish enough water to survive. When irrigation was restored in 2002, tens of thousands of adult salmon died.