

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Karuk Tribe • Environmental Protection Information Center • Klamath Forest Alliance • Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center

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TRIBE, CONSERVATION GROUPS SUE SIX RIVERS NATIONAL FOREST TO PROTECT SACRED SITES

***Groups Charge that Forest Supervisor Kelly ignored community, federal law, and his
own proposed plan***

Orleans, CA – After years of collaborative meetings between Six Rivers National Forest, the Karuk Tribe, conservation groups and community members, details of the Orleans Community Fuels Reduction Plan (OCFR) were agreed upon. However, last fall when Supervisor Tyrone Kelley directed his crews to begin logging with heavy equipment in areas sacred to the Karuk Tribe, they violated the agreement, federal law, and betrayed the trust of local landowners.

“We participated in good faith in the Forest Service’s collaborative process and we were assured that our sacred areas would be protected and our cultural values respected. It’s now obvious that those were hollow promises,” said Leaf Hillman, Natural Resources Director for the Karuk Tribe.

Over the past three years, the Orleans Ranger District in the Six Rivers National Forest held a series of stakeholder meetings allegedly designed to work with the Orleans community to develop a fuels reduction plan that both Native and non-native community members could accept. After dozens of meetings and an appeal of Kelly’s original proposal, tribal members, as well as non-native local residents, thought that a consensus had been reached. However, when logging began last fall, community members realized immediately that Kelly had reneged on his promises and violated the law by implementing a plan inconsistent with his own Environmental Impact Statement.

At issue is the use of heavy logging equipment in areas deemed sacred by the Karuk Tribe, divergence from measures designed to ‘protect, promote, enhance and restore’ stands of ecologically sensitive hardwoods, failure to protect large diameter trees, and a failure to make good on a commitment for multi-party monitoring during the fuels reduction operations.

According to Kimberly Baker of the Klamath Forest Alliance, “Our communities needs fire protection, and we support appropriate thinning,” but she adds, “this is apparently an industrial timber harvest plan masquerading as fire protection.”

The complaint filed today in Northern California District Court charges that Kelly and the US Forest Service violated the National Historic Preservation Act, National Environmental Protection Act, National Forest Management Act, Healthy Forests Restoration Act, and the Administrative Procedures Act. Plaintiffs in the suit include the Karuk Tribe, EPIC, Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center, and the Klamath Forest Alliance.

“We are proud to work with the Tribe to protect the landscapes they have been cared for for thousands of years. It’s a real shame, and a tragic reflection on the Forest Service’s institutional compulsion to pursue industrial logging at every opportunity, that the agency has squandered the opportunity to work with the tribe, the community, and environmental groups that do support the kind of sensible thinning outlined in the OCFR.,” said Scott Greacen, Executive Director of EPIC.

According to the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the project, the stated Purpose and Need for the Orleans Community Fuel Reduction and Forest Health Project (OCFR) is to “manage forest stands to reduce fuels accumulations and improve forest health around the community of Orleans, while enhancing cultural values associated with the Panamnik World Renewal Ceremonial District.”

However, the actual work on the ground is clearly inconsistent with these stated goals. According to Hillman, “Supervisor Kelly and the Forest Service have already destroyed cultural sites that are still used by the Tribe during World Renewal Ceremonies.”

The areas being debated represent 914 acres to be mechanically harvested. The USFS awarded the contract to Timber Products in Eureka for nearly \$1 million dollars.

Outraged Tribal members and local residents halted work on the project last November by blockading logging roads that access the units to be cut. Locals then invited local forest activists into the community to provide direct-action trainings in tree sitting and other tactics in preparation of the return of logging crews. Since then the project has been on hold, but no agreement between the Forest Service and the community has been reached.

In addition to his role as Natural Resources Director, Leaf Hillman is a Karuk Ceremonial Leader in Orleans. According to Hillman, “Supervisor Kelley has no respect for this community or native cultures. The Tribe and local community members worked hard to develop a fuels reduction plan that meets the needs of both the people and the Forest Service. Kelley’s actions are not only an act of bad faith; they are an act of cultural genocide. We will not sit idly by while he destroys the ecological integrity of these forests and the Karuk Tribe’s sacred areas -- we will defend our homeland.”

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Editor’s notes: send requests for photos of logged sacred areas or a copy of the complaint to ctucker@karuk.us; link to OCFR [Final EIS](#).