

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

Karuk Tribe

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For more information:

Craig Tucker, *Natural Resources Policy Advocate, Karuk Tribe*, 916-207-8294

KARUK TRIBE RELEASES CLIMATE ADAPTATION PLAN

- ***Calls for More Prescribed Fire***
- ***Seeks Gov. Newsome's Support***

Happy Camp, CA – Today the Karuk Tribe released a Climate Adaptation Plan which acknowledges that “the effects of climate change including changes in precipitation patterns, decreased snowpack increasing droughts, increasing frequency and severity of wildfires, and disease and pest outbreaks are immediate and occurring now.”

“Climate Change is real and it’s happening now,” stated Bill Tripp, Deputy Director of Karuk Natural Resources Department. “Our plan relies on the best available science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge to protect local communities and our culture.”

According to lead author of the Plan, Professor Kari Norgaard from the University of Oregon, “Climate change is one of the most dramatic and widespread problems the modern world has faced and attempting to come to terms with the data and implications is daunting. Indigenous people are disproportionately impacted by the changing climate as they lack the financial resources to build new infrastructure. However, their traditional knowledge of local ecosystems provides powerful insights on how to best manage these problems.”

The Karuk Tribe’s aboriginal territory includes 1.38 million acres in Northern California, an area that is suffering from catastrophic wildfires driven by decades of poor land management, fire suppression, and global warming. In fact, for most of the last 150 years, traditional Karuk burning practices were criminalized. The Plan attempts to reverse all this by re-establishing a more natural fire regime on the landscape through prescribed burns at appropriate times of year. “Karuk people have long been part of this ecosystem. Climate adaptation is about restoring human responsibilities and appropriate relationships to the natural world,” explains Tripp.

Currently California Governor Gavin Newsom and lawmakers are working on strategies to address the ever-increasing regularity of severe wildfires around the state. “We hope to serve as a pilot project for California in order to demonstrate how local communities can make themselves more fire resilient. We can’t put an end to fires, but we can work with fire on our own terms,” says Tripp.

The Karuk Tribe argues that a tribal set aside in the CalFire budget would enable them to treat thousands of acres in Northern California before another catastrophic event occurs while

providing a model that other communities can follow. “We are working with local state and federal agencies as well as our local fire safe councils. Managing the landscape has to be a collaboration with everyone,” concludes Tripp.

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Editor’s notes:

To learn more about the Karuk Tribe’s Climate Adaptation Plan and go to <https://karuktribeclimatechangeprojects.com/>