

**P R E S S   R E L E A S E**

**Karuk Tribe**

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**GROUND WATER REPORT: INCREASED GROUNDWATER PUMPING IS  
DEPLETING SCOTT RIVER FLOWS**

*Happy Camp, CA* – Today the Karuk Tribe released a report entitled *Groundwater Conditions in Scott Valley*. The report was prepared under contract with the Tribe by S. S. Popadopolous and Associates, a prominent environmental engineering firm.

The results show that as groundwater pumping has increased in Scott Valley over the years, stream flows have decreased. “We believe that this will have a critical effect on all natural resources,” explains Karuk Chairman Buster Attebery.

The report is based on extensive data presently available in the public record, including over 1,000 well logs, soil and geologic data, groundwater elevations, well tests, high-resolution land surface elevation data, crop and riparian vegetation mapping, climatological data and stream gage records. As part of this work, a high-resolution groundwater model of the Scott Valley has been prepared, suitable for characterization of valley-wide groundwater conditions and groundwater/surface-water interactions.

The report shows that unregulated groundwater use is a key factor in the decline of one of the Klamath’s most important salmon streams.

Some groundwater use in the Valley is regulated pursuant to the 1980 Scott Valley adjudication. However, the adjudication only applies to groundwater users within a limited area near the river channel referred to as the ‘interconnected zone.’ Outside the interconnected zone, groundwater users are free to pump all the water they wish. The overwhelming majority of wells drilled since 1980 have been placed outside this interconnected zone. The report shows that the interconnected zone is drawn too small such that much of the use in the Valley is not considered by the adjudication.

Since 1980, the number of wells has steadily increased. There were 99 irrigation wells in 1979; 130 irrigation wells by 1999; and 172 irrigation wells as of 2010. In all there are nearly 800 wells in Scott Valley.

“We support Siskiyou County’s agricultural economy but we have to find a better balance between agriculture and fisheries so we can all thrive economically and culturally,” says Attebery.

The Tribe hopes to work with local, state, and federal agencies as well as landowners to put the Groundwater Model to good use. The model can be used as tool to evaluate restoration ideas to determine what actions address the problem of impaired stream flows.

“We want to hear ideas that we can evaluate using this new ground water model. Can we solve this problem by recharging groundwater stores with off channel reservoirs or beaver ponds? Do we need a shorter irrigation season? We don’t know the answers to all these questions yet but that’s the next step and this model is a good tool for answering such questions,” says Attebery.

The Tribe plans to set up a technical work group made up of fisheries and hydrology experts, including local input, to develop a list of potential restoration actions that can be evaluated with the model. The idea is to develop a restoration plan for the Scott that allows for a sustainable fishery and healthy farm economy for the area.

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The report and an executive summary can be found at:

<http://www.karuk.us/karuk2/departments/natural-resources/dnr>