

Karuk Tribe PRESS Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Karuk Tribe Secures \$10 Million in State Funding to Build Regional Fire Training Center in Orleans

ORLEANS, CA — The Karuk Tribe proudly announces that it has secured \$10 million in state funding to construct a first-of-its-kind Regional Fire Resiliency Center in northeastern Humboldt County. This vital investment marks a major milestone in the Tribe's long-standing mission to restore cultural fire practices, enhance wildfire resilience, and protect the ecosystems and communities of the Klamath Basin.

The new Karuk Fire Training Center will be located in the heart of Orleans, on Tribal property adjacent to an RV park. The facility will serve as a permanent hub for year-round cultural and prescribed fire training, emergency response coordination, and climate resilience education. Once completed, it will be one of the most advanced Indigenous-led fire training centers in the United States.

“This is a game-changer—not just for the Karuk Tribe, but for our entire region,” said Russell “Buster” Attebery, Chairman of the Karuk Tribe. “This center represents decades of hard work by our fire crews, cultural leaders, and environmental stewards. With this support from the State of California, we’re creating lasting infrastructure that empowers our people to care for our lands the way our ancestors have done for generations—with fire.”

The \$10 million allocation, announced last week by California Senate President pro Tempore Mike McGuire and regional legislative partners, builds on a previous \$1.2 million planning grant awarded by the State in 2023 for design and engineering. The newly secured funds also include about \$600k from the BIA for planning and coordination as well as engineering and design through the Tribal Climate Resilience Program. This funding will support full-scale construction, which is slated to begin later this year.

The training center is poised to host nationally and internationally recognized programs such as the Klamath River Prescribed Fire Training Exchange (KTREX) and Karuk Indigenous Women-in-Fire TREX (KWTREX). These collaborative training events bring together firefighters, Tribal members, land managers, and scientists to practice fire safety and ecological burning across jurisdictional boundaries.

In addition to prescribed fire training, the Karuk Fire Training Center will provide:

- Cultural Fire Practitioner Trainings
- Workforce Development in Fire Management and Emergency Response

- Climate Resilience and Environmental Education
- Lodging for visiting Fire Leadership, researchers and other partners as well as evacuation space
- Emergency Staging and Response Infrastructure

“This early-season investment will make communities more wildfire-safe in every corner of California, including right here at home on the North Coast,” said Pro Tem McGuire in a statement. “The Karuk Fire Training Center will be a critical hub for prescribed fire training—a key to hardening our communities and forests to fire—and bring much-needed infrastructure to a fire-vulnerable region of the Golden State.”

The Karuk Tribe, recognized nationally for its leadership in Indigenous-led land stewardship, has long advocated for the revitalization of traditional fire practices. Before fire suppression policies were implemented in the 20th century, the Karuk people used low-intensity fire as a tool for ecological balance—clearing underbrush, enhancing biodiversity, and reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

“Cultural fire is not just about prevention—it’s about renewal,” said Bill Tripp, Director of Natural Resources and a leading voice in the Indigenous fire movement. “With this center, we’re bringing back knowledge that was nearly lost and creating a model for Tribal, Federal, and state partnerships that work.”

In recent years, the Tribe has partnered with agencies like CAL FIRE, The Nature Conservancy, and the U.S. Forest Service to carry out joint burns and training events. The new Fire Resiliency Center will expand capacity for this kind of collaborative work while prioritizing Indigenous values and protocols.

As California continues to face worsening wildfire seasons, projects like this demonstrate the vital role Self Governing Tribes play in building a more resilient, sustainable future. By investing in Indigenous fire knowledge, the state is taking a meaningful step toward environmental justice and land restoration.

Construction is expected to begin in late 2025, with the first sessions of fire training projected to take place in 2028. Tribal leadership will host an opening ceremony prior to the start of construction. Details will be announced on the Tribe’s website and social media channels.

For more information, or to learn how to support this initiative, please visit www.karuk.us or contact the Karuk Tribe’s Director of Public Information at (707) 951-9910.



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