



PRESS RELEASE

KARUK TRIBE OF CALIFORNIA

YUROK TRIBE OF CALIFORNIA



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AT SAN FRANCISCO RALLY, TRIBES STAND WITH CONGRESSMEN TO CALL FOR SOLUTIONS TO KLAMATH RIVER WOES

Tribal Leaders cite Dam Removal as Key Restoration Step

San Francisco— At a rally Monday, leaders of the Yurok and Karuk Tribes of Northern California will join Congressional Representatives Mike Thompson (D-CA), George Miller (D-CA) and Lynn Woolsey (D-CA), and hundreds of non-native fishermen to call for lasting solutions to environmental problems on the Klamath River.

The Pier 47 rally takes place against a backdrop of a fall season salmon fishing closure that severely impacts fishermen along 700 miles of California and Oregon coastline. As original inhabitants of the river, Yurok and Karuk share a special interest in its ecological restoration. The Klamath River and its once-bountiful salmon have been central to tribal life for thousands of years.

The pressure on Klamath fish populations is nothing new, says Troy Fletcher, a consultant for the Yurok Tribe. The Tribes have had insufficient fishing seasons for many years. Not only are populations of fall Chinook in trouble, all fish stocks in the Klamath River face similar problems. “We have witnessed numerous juvenile and adult fish kills in the past few years. For the native peoples of the Klamath Basin, this is more than an economic loss—it is a loss of our culture. A solution is needed fast.”

While the Klamath once hosted nearly a million returning adult fish each year, the return in 2006 is estimated to be less than 21,000, a decline of 97%. Many fisheries experts cite four dams operated by PacifiCorp as largely responsible for the plummeting numbers.

The Tribes and other parties are currently in negotiations with PacifiCorp to develop a settlement agreement to determine the fate of the dams. Ron Reed, a traditional dip-net fisherman with the Karuk Tribe, describes the current Federal Energy Regulatory Commission dam re-licensing process as “something that only happens once every 50 years. It presents all of us with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to restore the Klamath by having the dams removed.”

The Tribes urge all parties interested in resolving Klamath issues to work together toward this end. The Tribes support disaster and other relief for communities immediately affected by the lack of abundance of Klamath River fish. They also call for the formation of a “blue collar panel” that should be specifically tasked with coming up with recommendations of how fishing dependent communities can survive this and anticipated closures in upcoming years.

The Tribes note that the crises of this year may be only the first of several more to come. There are no silver bullets that can solve the Klamath River’s complex problems overnight.

Noting the recent appointment of William J. Ferhman as new PacifiCorp president, Fletcher said, “We are optimistic about this recent development. We hope the personnel changes will allow us to move forward in crafting a settlement that creates stability for Klamath Basin communities, while removing the dams that are killing fish. Our Tribes cannot survive without a healthy river and a healthy fishery.”

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