

Press Release
Karuk Tribe of California

NEWS RELEASE

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Klamath River Tribes Appeal To Governor: “Help Bring the Salmon Home”
March, Rally, and Film Mark 8th Annual International Day of Action for Rivers

Sacramento, CA – On Monday March 14, 2005, over 200 members of the Karuk, Yurok, Hoopa and Klamath Tribes will rally at the state capital to urge Governor Schwarzenegger to serve as “Conan the Riparian” and increase his efforts to restore Klamath River salmon. Fishermen, human rights advocates, and conservationists will be on hand to show their support of the Tribes’ ongoing struggle to protect their native salmon.

The Klamath River was once the third most productive salmon river in America, returning as many as 1.2 million adult salmon annually. After nearly a century of dam building, diversions, and logging in the watershed, only 1/10 that number return today.

The Tribes, along with their allies in the commercial fishing, human rights, conservation, and ranching communities hope to focus the governor’s attention on the Klamath River Dams, currently being relicensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The six dam complex is owned by PacifiCorp, a subsidiary of the multinational energy giant, Scottish Power (*NYSE – SPI*), based in Galsgow Scotland.

Last summer, the Tribes visited Scottish Power’s shareholder meeting in Scotland to build support for dam removal and salmon restoration on the Klamath. This time they bring their message to Sacramento. According to Leaf Hillman, vice-chairman of the Karuk Tribe, “We represent the three biggest Indian Tribes in California and the biggest in Oregon. We need the governor to take strong steps to restore the Klamath River to the benefit of not only the Tribes, but to all Californians and Oregonians.”

For the tribes, salmon represent an integral part of their cultures. Each tribe has unique ceremonies based on the annual return of salmon. As the salmon runs dwindle ceremonies are lost. In addition, commercial fishermen and communities dependant on the fishing economy struggle to survive as well. Hillman argues that, “what’s at risk here is the region’s cultural heritage as well as the economy.”

According to a study by the Institute of Fisheries Resources, a restored Klamath Basin would be valued at \$4.5 billion, providing a needed economic boost to struggling rural economies along the California and Oregon coasts.

Although several factors are blamed for the salmon’s decline, the Tribes are currently focused on the dams, which, according to tribal leaders, could be removed as part of the FERC relicensing process. According to Jeff Mitchell of the Klamath River Inter-tribal Fish and Water Commission, “We know that dam removal won’t solve all of our problems, but re-opening the 350 miles of habit upstream of the dams is a prerequisite to any other restoration programs.” Dams create problems for salmon by blocking access to spawning grounds and

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degrading water quality. The current dam license expires in March 2006. Dam licenses typically last 50 years, therefore, river advocates view relicensing as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to restore rivers.

Last summer, Scottish Power executives promised tribal members that dam removal is “on the table” as a possible result of the relicensing. But a willingness on the part of the company will not likely be enough to make the tribes’ goals a reality. Political support will be necessary as well.

So far, tribal leaders say that they are encouraged by the actions of the governor, but they hope their rally will prompt the governor to take bolder steps to bring the Klamath salmon home. The tribes say that state agencies can place strict conditions on any new license and that for removal to happen, state and federal funding will be needed.

March 14 marks the 8th annual International Day of Action for Rivers and this event is one of dozens being held around the world to bring awareness to the negative impacts that dams, diversions, and water pollution create for communities dependant on healthy rivers.

Groups marching in support of the Tribes include Friends of the River, International Rivers Network, and the Pacific Federation of Fishermen’s Associations.

For information log on to: www.friendsoftheriver.org and www.irn.org

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