

Karuk Tribe of California

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

For Immediate Release: March 29, 2005

For more information:

Leaf Hillman , World Renewal Priest, *Karuk Tribe*:
Sandi Tripp, Director of Natural Resources, *Karuk Tribe*
Craig Tucker, Klamath Campaign Coordinator, *Karuk Tribe*

530-493-5305 x2040
530-627-3446 x13
916-207-8294

New Report cites Tribal Sacred Site as one of California's "Most Threatened Wild Places"

Klamath and Salmon Rivers Threatened by Logging, Dams, and Diversions

Happy Camp, CA – A new report, released today by the California Wilderness Coalition, describes California's 10 most threatened wild places. Based on surveys completed by conservation groups, scientists and other wild-land experts, "Our Natural Heritage at Risk" includes forests, rivers, deserts and other landscapes throughout the state.

The report highlights what the Karuk Tribe has known for years, some of their most important cultural and natural areas are slowly but surely being destroyed.

The CWC report includes the Klamath and Salmon rivers. Both rivers serve as important habitat for salmon, including coho salmon, listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. The Klamath, one of the west's largest rivers, reaches from northwestern California to southeastern Oregon. At one time the Klamath was the third greatest salmon producing river in America, hosting over 1.2 million spawning salmon each year. Today dams and diversions have taken a dramatic toll on the salmon. Today the salmon runs are less than one tenth of what they once were.

The Salmon River is one of the Klamath's most important tributaries. It serves as one of the last cold water refuges for spring run salmon. Once the most prolific run of salmon in the Klamath Basin, only hundreds return today. Poor logging practices and mining operations have contributed to the decline.

For the Karuk, the second largest Tribe in California, the destruction of the Klamath and Salmon rivers go beyond the loss of a pristine wilderness, it represents the loss of a subsistence fishery and the desecration of sacred sites.

The Karuk believe that the confluence of the Salmon and Klamath rivers is the center of the universe and call the area 'Katimin'. It is the site of the annual World Renewal Ceremony where the world is remade for the coming year.

"We gather at Katimin to remake the world as our ancestors have since time immemorial," according to Leaf Hillman, vice-chairman of the Tribe and World Renewal Priest. "We gather to pray for all people and things that make up this world, for their

health and their success. The impact that dams, diversions, and logging has had on this place and on the people that depend on it for both their physical and spiritual well being is nothing short of desecration. For Christians, it would be like bulldozing the birthplace of Christ.”

The Karuk Tribe along with other tribes in the basin and a host of environmental and fishermen’s groups are currently working to protect and restore both rivers. This includes an effort to remove Klamath River dams through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission’s relicensing process currently underway.

For view previous press releases on the Klamath dam removal campaign and a recent report on the impact that the decline in the salmon fishery has had on the health of Tribal members, log on to the press room at www.friendsoftheriver.org.

To download California Wilderness Coalition’s *Our Natural Heritage At Risk*, log on to: <http://www.calwild.org/resources/pubs/10most05.php>

###