



YUROK TRIBE

190 Klamath Boulevard • Post Office Box 1027 • Klamath, CA 95548

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: September 26, 2003

Contact:

Susan Masten, Yurok Tribe Chairperson, 707-498-4539 or 707-482-1350

Zeke Grader, Executive Director, PCFFA, 415-561-5080

Carl Zichella, Sierra Club 916-557-1100, ex 104, 916-837-7127 (cell)

S. Craig Tucker, Friends of the River, 916-995-1794

Stanley Young, Resources Agency, 916-653-5792

Yurok Tribe, State Resources Secretary, Commercial Fishermen and Conservationists Call on Federal Government to Help Forge Klamath Basin Solutions

Event marks one-year anniversary of biggest fish kill in tribal history

Sacramento, CA -- California Resources Secretary Mary Nichols joined the Yurok Tribe, commercial fishermen, and conservationists in calling today on the federal government to bring water demands in the Klamath Basin back into balance with environmental needs.

The Resources Secretary joined the groups that rely on healthy California salmon populations at a press conference marking the one-year anniversary of the Klamath fish kill in which 33,000 adult salmon died as a result of misguided Bush administration water policies. The press conference coincides with American Indian Day.

“To see 33,000 dead fish in such a beautiful river is just unimaginable. All things are connected. When you make the river sick you make the people sick,” said Yurok Tribe Chairperson Susan Masten. “The Yurok Tribe has been, and remains, committed to working with the federal government and all parties with interests in the Basin to develop creative and practical long-term solutions. We stand ready to consult with the Department of Interior to address meaningful approaches to the Basin’s critical problems.”

“The Davis administration stands by the Yurok and the other tribes in the Klamath River basin in support of a restored fishery,” said Mary D. Nichols, California Secretary for Resources.

--MORE--

---Yurok, Klamath, 2-2-2

“As we have in the past, we again call on the federal government to work with all parties to develop solutions to address the many issues in the Klamath River,” said Secretary Nichols. “A basin-wide solution will need to address the needs not only of the agricultural interests, but also the Yurok and other tribes in the watershed, coastal communities dependent on the ocean fishery, landowners, environmental groups, local governments, and both Oregon and California.”

Secretary Nichols noted there had been no response from the Bush administration to a letter she sent in May asking the federal government to revisit their approach to operations of the Klamath River Project.

Nichols called for the release of the most authoritative scientific study of Klamath River flow requirements, the Hardy Phase II Report, which is being withheld by the Bush White House. On August 13, 2003 Senator Dianne Feinstein sent a similar request to Interior Secretary Gale Norton and Secretary of Commerce, Don Evans. “I believe it is absolutely critical that all scientific information on the Klamath must be made public so policymakers can assess how to allocate water to benefit both the farmers and the fisheries” wrote Senator Feinstein.

Actions taken by the Federal Government over the past year have done little to reassure Californians that meaningful progress toward long-term solutions to the Basin’s water problems is occurring. River, coastal and tribal communities all suffered due to the management of water in the Klamath River Basin and the resulting harm to the river’s salmon.

“The Bush administration should stop playing politics with the most productive California salmon river, the cultural life of the Yurok People, and the livelihood of California fishermen,” said Carl Zichella, Regional Staff Director of the Sierra Club. “We call on the Bush administration to immediately release these reports and to rely on sound science in managing the Klamath.”

“The federal government can easily mount a full scale war and occupation of another nation in less than a year, but it can’t release a report telling us how much water the fish need or come up with steps to help farmers retire excess irrigated lands? Give me a break!” said Zeke Grader, Executive Director of the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations. “The game playing and incompetence of this administration is going to kill our fishing communities.”

--MORE--

Participants pointed out that federal officials have promised too much water to too many different interests; even in wet water years, there is not enough water to satisfy all those promises. They also noted that Klamath water managers have for too long ignored the rights of the Klamath Basin Native American tribes, rights which pre-date those of agricultural irrigators in the upper Basin.

According to S. Craig Tucker, Outreach Director for Friends of the River, “In the wake of last year's fish kill, it is evident that we must take bold steps to restore the Klamath River. Friends of the River joins the with Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, Tribes, and the State Water Resources Control Board in asking for a full evaluation of the benefits of dam removal on the Klamath River.”

“Solving the Klamath crisis will require a balanced approach, the best available information, and the political will to bring Basin demands for water back into balance with what the environment needs,” said Secretary Nichols.

Photos of last year's fish kill are available for publication at:

<http://www.earthjustice.org/news/display.html?ID=444>

###