

PRESS RELEASE

Karuk Tribe • Yurok Tribe

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FEDS PROPOSE CUTTING KLAMATH RIVER FLOWS AS IRRIGATORS ILLEGALLY DIVERT RIVER

Plan could cut Klamath River Flows by 40%

Klamath Basin, CA – Last week Tribal communities celebrated as Klamath dam removal plans were approved. This week, the celebration was cut short as the Bureau of Reclamation proposed a plan to cut Klamath River flows by 40%.

“We are hurt and frustrated,” said Yurok Vice Chairman Frankie Myers. “We are on the verge of the biggest salmon restoration project in history and now we learn of plans to de-water the river.”

Several consecutive years of drought has led to irrigation diversion curtailments, poor water quality, and fish kills. With mounting political pressure on federal agencies to fill the only water storage feature on the mainstem Klamath, Upper Klamath Lake, the Bureau of Reclamation has floated a proposal to cut river flows by 40% when flows are already below recommended minimums.

“The river is already suffering from inadequate flows. The salmon simply have no more to give,” noted Yurok biologist Barry McCovey. McCovey adds that endangered Coho salmon are currently spawning in the mainstem of the Klamath River because flows in tributaries in which they normally spawn are too low. “Cutting water now will kill salmon eggs, possibly wiping out the entire run.”

Adding insult to injury, the Klamath Drainage District in Klamath Falls, OR is currently diverting nearly 1,000-acre feet of water a day from the Klamath. This diversion is deemed illegal by federal agencies, but so far, no law enforcement agency has acted to stop it.

“We are removing dams and Congress has provided significant restoration dollars to the Klamath, but at the end of the day fish still need water,” said Karuk Chairman Russell ‘Buster’ Attebery. “We call on the Administration to act promptly to stop illegal water diversions.”

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Editor's notes

Diversions on the Klamath Irrigation Project can be viewed [here](#) in real time. Klamath Drainage District controls the Ady Canal and the North Canal. A screen shot taken morning of December 16, 2022 is below.