

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### Yurok Tribe • Institute for Fisheries Resources • Earthjustice • Ridges to Riffles Indigenous Conservation Group

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### US Appeals Court Rules in Favor of Endangered Species *Pivotal Decision Protects Klamath River's Recovering Salmon Runs*

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals recently ruled in favor of the Yurok Tribe, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations and the Institute for Fisheries Resources in determining that the operations of a large federal irrigation project near the Klamath River's headwaters must adhere to Endangered Species Act protections for imperiled salmon and suckers (Koptu and C'waam).

The court's decision last Wednesday affirms that the Bureau of Reclamation's management of the 230,000-acre Klamath Irrigation Project must comply with the act and ensure the survival of Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast (SONCC) Coho salmon and Chinook salmon.

"This decision supports the continued healing of the Klamath Basin and our community," said Joseph L. James, the Chairman of the Yurok Tribe. "While we welcome this outcome, we'd prefer to sit down with irrigators, tribes and commercial fishers to identify solutions that support a shared and prosperous future for all communities in the watershed."

"This decision is a win for every fisherman who depends on healthy salmon runs," said Glen Spain, the NW Regional Director and General Legal Counsel of the Institute for Fisheries Resources (IFR), a fishing industry-based salmon restoration organization. "When the river suffers, our coastal communities suffer and our jobs disappear. This ruling helps restore accountability."

The Klamath River is a nationally significant river, and is capable of supporting Indigenous peoples, sustainable agriculture, responsible timber harvest, abundant salmon fisheries and an incredible diversity of species.

The Yurok Tribe, Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations and the Institute for Fisheries Resources filed the lawsuit in 2019 in response to the significant role that the Bureau of Reclamation's mismanagement of finite water supplies has played in the decline of Klamath salmon populations. This chapter of the case grew out of an effort by the United States, along with the

Yurok Tribe and fishing groups to confirm that Reclamation's operations were in fact subject to the requirements of the ESA.

The Yurok Tribe's salmon quota, established by the Pacific Fishery Management Council, has been inadequate to meet the subsistence and ceremonial needs of the Yurok people for decades. This disruption has directly harmed the health and well-being of every member of the Yurok Tribe, which is California's largest tribe.

In addition to serving as the Tribe's lifeline, the Klamath River is the primary driver of ocean-based recreational and commercial salmon fisheries in Northern California. After an unprecedented three-year closure, California's salmon fisheries opened in 2026, still allowing only a very short season. In this economically disadvantaged region, the commercial and recreational fishing industries represent an important source of jobs and income.