



Yurok Today

The Voice of the Yurok People

Yurok Tribe wins major settlement

Frontier to pay \$500k, invest millions in internet on tribal lands

See story on page 3





APRIL 2021 PUBLIC NOTICES



2021 YUROK TRIBE ELECTION NOTICE

TO ALL YUROK TRIBAL MEMBERS WHO WOULD
LIKE TO RUN FOR THE FOLLOWING SEATS:

CHAIRPERSON VICE-CHAIRPERSON ORICK DISTRICT

Any Yurok Tribal members that are interested in running for Election as a Representative for the Yurok Tribal Council may pick up Nomination papers in person **by appointment only** beginning **June 14, 2021**, at the Yurok Tribal Office in Klamath.

All Candidates must be 25 years of age for a district seat and 30 years of age for Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson as of October 13, 2021. There is a \$105 filing fee due when you pick up the Nomination Packet at the Klamath Office in person. A Live Scan will also be done at the time you pick up your nomination packet.

Chairperson position will be a **one-time** four-year term.

The Nomination Period closes **July 16, 2021**.
For More Information or to make an appointment, Please call the Election Office at (707) 482-1350 ext. 1320.



YUROK TRIBE 2021 ELECTION SCHEDULE

OCTOBER 13, 2021	PRIMARY ELECTION
NOVEMBER 17, 2021	RUN OFF ELECTION

JUNE 14 (8:30AM)	FIRST DAY TO ISSUE NOMINATION PAPERS FOR COUNCIL OFFICE
JULY 16 (5:00PM)	LAST DAY TO REGISTER WHEN MOVING INTO A DIFFERENT DISTRICT (89 DAYS)
JULY 16 (5:00PM)	LAST DAY TO FILE NOMINATION PAPERS
AUGUST 13 (5:00PM)	LAST DAY TO FILE INITIATIVE(S)
AUGUST 13	PUBLICATION OF NOTICE OF ELECTION (59 DAYS)
AUGUST 20 (5:00PM)	LAST DAY TO RECEIVE CANDIDATE STATEMENTS FOR THE SAMPLE BALLOT (250 words) AND NEWSLETTER (750 words)
AUGUST 30	LAST DAY TO REGISTER FOR PRIMARY ELECTION (44 DAYS)
AUG 31-SEPT 2	ELECTION BOARD CERTIFICATION OF NEW REGISTRANTS
SEPTEMBER 3	MAIL OUT SAMPLE BALLOTS TO REGISTERED VOTERS (40 DAYS)
SEPTEMBER 10	MAILING OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS (34 DAYS)
OCTOBER 1	LAST DAY TO RECEIVE ABSENTEE BALLOT REQUEST BY MAIL (14 DAYS)
OCTOBER 12	LAST DAY TO PICK UP ABSENTEE BALLOT IN OFFICE (1 DAY)
OCTOBER 13, 2021	PRIMARY ELECTION
OCTOBER 22	MAILING OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS FOR RUN OFF (26 DAYS)
NOVEMBER 5	LAST DAY TO RECEIVE ABSENTEE BALLOT REQUEST BY MAIL FOR RUN OFF (14 DAYS) <i>ONLY IF YOU DID NOT REQUEST AN ABSENTEE FOR THE PRIMARY ELECTION</i>
NOVEMBER 16	LAST DAY TO PICK UP ABSENTEE BALLOT IN OFFICE FOR RUN OFF (1 DAY)
NOVEMBER 17, 2021	RUN OFF ELECTION

2021 VOTING DISTRICTS

CHAIRPERSON (4-year term), VICE-CHAIRPERSON AND ORICK DISTRICTS

Election Schedule is subject to change including a mail ballot only election in the event the Pandemic is still ongoing or there is a natural disaster

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Frontier Communications was required to pay the Yurok Tribe 500k and invest \$5 million in a Yurok-led internet infrastructure project.

Commission approves tribal settlement

Telecoms company to pay \$500k, invest millions on Yurok tribal lands

The California Public Utilities Commission approved a settlement requiring the Frontier Communications Corporation to invest up to \$5 million in a Yurok Tribe-led fiber optic cable project in rural Northern California. The company must also pay the Tribe \$500,000 in part to reimburse losses incurred as a result of frequent internet service failures.

The settlement is one of three agreements in a CPUC Transfer Proceeding associated with Frontier's Chapter 11 bankruptcy. On April 14, 2020, the national telecommunications company filed for bankruptcy in New York to resolve an approximately \$17.5 billion debt. As part of its emergence from Chapter 11, Frontier was required to receive CPUC approval. Last December, the Yurok Tribe successfully petitioned to become a party to the CPUC proceeding which allowed the Tribe to file an opening brief and submit evidence.

"We joined this case to protect our people, whose daily lives are impacted by Frontier's operations. From now on, we expect to receive reliable internet services from the company," said Joseph L. James, the Chairman of the Yurok Tribe. "We applaud the California Public Utility Commission for hearing our concerns and taking action on this timely issue. Based on the terms of the settlement, it is clear that the Commission understands the significant disparity of service on the Yurok Reservation compared to Frontier's other customers and the importance of further investment for the benefit of the Yurok Reservation."

According to the agreement, Frontier will contribute up to \$5 million dollars to a Yurok Tribe-led project involving the installation of a fiber optic cable between Orick and Klamath and "fiber to the premises" connections on the Yurok Reservation. The Tribe will own a minimum of 50 percent of the fiber and will receive half of all profits generated from the strategically located line. In addition to investing in this much-needed infrastructure,



The Yurok Tribe joined the Frontier case because because Frontier's operations impact the daily lives of Yurok people.

the company was ordered to compensate the Tribe \$500,000 as reimbursement for lengthy internet outages occurring before and during the COVID-19 crisis. Frontier will also provide critical data to the Tribe, which will inform future broadband projects on tribal lands. Additionally, the collective settlement agreements contain several other conditions that are relevant to the Yurok Tribe and many other tribal nations in the state. The stipulations include:

- Each affected customer on tribal lands will receive a customer credit of \$10/day for service outages greater than 24 hours (double the \$5 credit on non-tribal lands)
- Tribal liaisons will be hired to coordinate with tribal governments
- Frontier will deploy broadband with speeds higher than 25/3 Mbps to 4,000 locations on tribal lands within its service area. The fiber line between Klamath and Orick will complement

"WE JOINED THIS CASE TO PROTECT OUR PEOPLE, WHOSE DAILY LIVES ARE IMPACTED BY FRONTIER'S OPERATIONS. "

- JOSEPH L. JAMES, CHAIRMAN OF THE YUROK TRIBE

the Klamath River Rural Broadband Initiative (KRRBI) project. Co-managed by the Yurok and Karuk Tribes and currently in the permitting phase, KRRBI will extend a fiber optic line from Orleans to Orick, which will greatly improve internet speeds and coverage on tribal lands. This far-sighted undertaking will further fortify the Yurok Tribe's Yurok Connect network. Yurok Connect is one of only a few tribally owned internet service providers in Indian Country. The Yurok-owned enterprise currently purchases bandwidth from Frontier and distributes it to reservation homes that would otherwise be unserved. Yurok Connect also serves the Tribe's headquarters and ancillary tribal government offices as well as several privately owned and tribally owned businesses. However, Frontier's distribution system has experienced regular interruptions, which has been particularly problematic since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. Residing hours from the nearest doctor's office, Yurok Reservation residents depend on the internet to participate in virtual health appointments, to sign up for vaccination services and much more. The constant disruptions in service during the pandemic were a major factor contributing to the Tribe's decision to join the CPUC Frontier Transfer Proceeding.

In addition to the KRRBI project, the Yurok Tribe is separately upgrading and expanding its Yurok Connect system. The Yurok Connect Broadband Project will significantly enhance emergency communications on the reservation. In March, tribal leaders and the reservation community celebrated a major milestone in the broadband improvement project. Family homes and tribal elders living in Wautec, the most remote part of the reservation, received first-time internet access following the installation of a new, 150-foot tower. The remainder of the project is expected to be completed later this year.

"Together, these projects will significantly strengthen our communications capacity, our sovereignty and our community. Building our own communications system is representative of how we are reclaiming our ability to determine our own destiny. I am looking forward to the day when we won't have to solely rely on a large corporation for this essential service," concluded Chairman James.

Tribe recovers more than 2,400 acres


Purchase results in 34,000 continuous acres of Yurok owned land

The Yurok Tribe today announced that 2,424 acres of privately owned culturally and ecologically significant timberlands in Northern California will be transferred to the Tribe for permanent ownership. The return of this significant forest area to the Tribe's ownership is the result of a unique partnership by the Yurok Tribe with investment firm New Forests, who acquired the land in 2016 on behalf of institutional investors, and The Trust for Public Land, who supported the Tribe in accessing funds from the California State Resources Agency to finance the purchase.

Since time immemorial, the Yurok Tribe has resided in this part of the state and holistically manages more than 75,000 acres of forest along the Klamath River. With 6,311 enrolled members, the Yurok Tribe is California's largest federally recognized Tribe. During the past decade, the Yurok Tribe has successfully recovered a portion of their original lands and is now actively engaged in multiple forest rehabilitation projects on the recently recovered properties.



Ke'pel Creek is a critically important drainage for fish and the Yurok community.



“The Ke’pel Creek watershed has an immense biological and cultural value. We sincerely thank The Trust for Public Land and New Forests for helping us regain this incredibly important property. Wok-hlew’. This watershed is invaluable to us because it provides drinking water to our families and is adjacent to an ongoing forest restoration project site. Now, we will be able to extend the project to create several thousand continuous acres of productive habitat, where deer, elk and many other species will thrive. It is a good day for the Yurok people,” said Joseph L. James, the Chairman of the Yurok Tribe.

New Forests is an international forestry investment manager whose U.S. business manages more than \$300 million of California forestry investments as part of its \$4.5 billion global portfolio. New Forests has been a partner with the Yurok Tribe on multiple projects since 2011, including financing and developing the first-ever forest carbon offset project under the California regulatory cap and trade system on 7,600 acres of land held by the Yurok Tribe in 2014.

New Forests’ U.S. Managing Director, Brian Shillinglaw remarked, “As part of a larger timberland investment in the region, New Forests identified the opportunity to return the Ke’pel Creek property to tribal ownership, while also enrolling the land into a long-term climate mitigation project. The forest carbon offset project we developed at Ke’pel Creek will continue to provide climate mitigation benefits and generate income for the Tribe from sustainable forest management and additional carbon offset sales as the trees continue to remove carbon from the atmosphere. The return of this land to the Yurok would not have been possible without California’s world-leading climate programs.”

New Forests engaged The Trust for Public Land for its expertise and land for people mission to support the transaction and conveyance of the property to The Yurok Tribe, who will now own and manage it in perpetuity. The Trust for Public Land was instrumental in identifying and securing funding from the State of California to support the transaction.

“We are proud to have worked with the Yurok Tribe and New Forests to return this land to tribal ownership. Returning this land to its original owners is another example of our focus on equity in land conservation, we know that the property will be protected in perpetuity while also providing income to the tribe through sustainable timber harvest,” said Guillermo Rodriguez, California state director for The Trust for Public Land.

The Trust for Public Land has a long history of working with tribal communities in California to return culturally important

land, including the Sinkyone Intertribal Wilderness and the Kashia Coastal Reserve. In Northern California and across the country, the organization has partnered with more than 70 tribal governments and organizations to restore ownership and management of more than 200,000 acres.

The Tribe will employ a highly effective blend of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and western science to re-create the environmental conditions that existed in this region. This farsighted approach to restoring the landscape aims to reestablish the old-growth forests, pristine creeks and sweeping prairies that sustained an extraordinary abundance of native fish, bird and mammal species for millennia prior to the Gold Rush ushering in clear-cut logging, compromising much of the best habitat. The new property contains stands of mature evergreen trees, which are vital for carbon sequestration and provide ideal habitat for local wildlife, including the imperiled Pacific fisher and Humboldt marten.

About The Trust for Public Land

The Trust for Public Land creates parks and protects land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. Millions of people live within a 10-minute walk of a Trust for Public Land park, garden or natural area, and millions more visit these sites every year. To support The Trust for Public Land and share why nature matters to you, visit www.tpl.org.

About New Forests

New Forests is a sustainable real assets manager offering leading-edge strategies in responsible forestry with USD 4.5 billion in AUM across a global portfolio of nearly 1 million hectares (2.4 million acres) of forestry and conservation investments. As global demand for resources grows, there is a need to increase productivity while ensuring the conservation of the world’s remaining natural forests. New Forests seeks to create investment strategies that provide lasting solutions to this challenge. Through responsible management of forests and other real assets, we create shared benefit for investors and local communities alike. New Forests is a Certified B Corp with offices and assets in Australia, New Zealand, Southeast Asia and the U.S. To learn more, visit www.newforests.com.au.

Condors will soon return to Yurok Country

Tribe, partners overcome last big hurdle before reintroduction

For the first time in 100 years, the endangered California condor will return to the Pacific Northwest. Once on the brink of extinction, this iconic species has made significant steps towards recovery. Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and the Yurok Tribe announced a final rule that will help facilitate the creation of a new California condor release facility for the reintroduction of condors to Yurok Ancestral Territory and Redwood National Park, which is in the northern portion of the species' historic range. This facility will be operated by the Northern California Condor Restoration Program, a partnership between Redwood National Park and Yurok Tribe.

The rule will designate the condors affiliated with this program as a nonessential, experimental population under the Endangered Species Act. This status will provide needed flexibility in managing the reintroduced population, reduce the regulatory impact of reintroducing a federally listed species, and facilitate cooperative conservation.

"The California condor is a shining example of how a species can be brought back from the brink of extinction through the power of partnerships," said Paul Souza, Regional Director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's California-Great Basin Region. "I would like to thank the Yurok Tribe, National Park Service, our state partners, and others, who were instrumental in this project. Together, we can help recover and conserve this magnificent species for future generations."

With a wingspan of almost 10 feet, the California condor is the largest soaring land bird in North America. These massive vultures are essential members of their ecosystems and play a significant role in the spiritual and cultural beliefs of the Yurok Tribe, as well as many other Tribes, throughout northern California and the Pacific Northwest.

Over the past twelve years, the Yurok Tribe has led this reintroduction effort and completed a tremendous amount of legwork to prepare for the return of condors to the Pacific Northwest. Extensive environmental assessments, contaminant analyses, and community outreach were just a few of the requisite tasks. The Tribe completed this endeavor because the condor is an irreplaceable part of a sacred cultural landscape. Pending completion of the condor release facility, the anticipated release of condors would be fall of 2021 or spring of 2022.




Yurok Wildlife Department Director Tiana Williams-Claussen participates in a training with the Oregon Zoo and RNP to prepare for condor reintroduction.

"For the last 20 years, the Yurok Tribe has been actively engaged in the restoration of the rivers, forests and prairies in our ancestral territory. The reintroduction of the condor is one component of this effort to reconstruct the diverse environmental conditions that once existed in our region. We are extremely proud of the fact that our future generations will not know a world without pre-go-neesh. We are excited to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Redwood National Park on the final stages of the project and beyond," said Joseph L. James, Chairman of the Yurok Tribe.

California condors prehistorically ranged from California to Florida and, in contemporary times, from Western Canada to Northern Mexico. By the mid-20th century, condor populations drastically declined due to poaching and poisoning. In 1967, the California condor was listed as endangered. In 1982, only 23 condors survived worldwide. By 1987, all remaining wild condors were placed into a captive breeding program. Thus, began an intensive recovery program to save the species from extinction.

As a result of exemplary conservation partnerships, and intensive captive breeding and reintroduction efforts, there are now over 300 California condors in the wild in California, Arizona,



Utah and Baja California. However, the bird is still listed as endangered and lead poisoning (largely caused by ingesting lead shot or fragments of lead bullets when feeding on carcasses) is listed as one of the species' primary threats.

"The return of condors to the skies above Redwood National and State Parks is a critical step toward recovery of this majestic landscape," said Steve Mietz, superintendent of Redwood National and State Parks. "Working with our friends and partners, the Yurok Tribe and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we will continue the unparalleled success story of condor recovery allowing all Americans to visit the tallest trees in the world while watching one of the largest birds in the world soar overhead."

"We are excited for this opportunity to bring these iconic birds back to California habitat that has not been occupied for decades," said Stafford Lehr, Deputy Director of Wildlife and Fisheries for the California Department of Fish and Wildlife. "These birds are

important to the biodiversity of the landscape and we are pleased with the collaboration amongst state and federal agencies, the Yurok Tribe, and private companies to conserve this species." The final rule exempts most incidental take of condors within the nonessential experimental population, provided the take is unintentional and not due to negligent conduct. Although the rule exempts most incidental take, certain activities are prohibited within 656 feet (200 meters) of an occupied nest.

These include habitat alteration (e.g., removing trees, erecting structures, altering the nest structure or perches near the nest) and significant visual or noise disturbance (e.g., tree felling, chainsaws, helicopter overflights, concrete cutters, fireworks or explosives). There are two exemptions: emergency fuel treatment activities by federal, state, tribal, or local government agencies to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires and responses to wildfire or other emergencies.

Feral cow hunters: watch out for domestic cows

As a precaution, the Yurok Tribe Wildlife Department (YTWD) would like to remind those hunting feral cattle on the Yurok Reservation, Fee, and Trust lands to ensure the animals are truly feral before harvesting because there are legitimate owned cattle on Yurok lands in addition to feral cattle. Take your time to look for brands, ear tags, or ear notches. If any animals in a herd are marked, their ownership extends to the entire herd in the presence of that marked animal. Community members are encouraged to reach out to residents in areas they are seeing cattle to determine ownership before assuming they are feral animals.

Tribe members and community members living on Yurok lands (Reservation, Fee, and Trust) who own cattle are encouraged to maintain clear brands, ear tags, and ear notches. Currently, the YTWD is removing feral cattle from the Blue Creek watershed and lower Bear Creek where there are few if any non-feral cows. The Yurok Tribe Natural Resources Division initiated the feral cattle removal project to protect and improve salmon & steelhead spawning creeks, elk & deer habitat, and reduce non-point pollution sources. Yurok Tribe citizens may legally harvest these feral cows on the reservation. Non-Yurok citizens are prohibited from hunting all animal species on the reservation.

Please contact Ungulate Specialist Biologist Preston Taylor (707) 954-9342 ptaylor@yuroktribe.nsn.us or YTWD Director Tiana Williams-Claussen (707) 954-8591 tiana@yuroktribe.nsn.us.

us for further information. We would especially like to hear from cattle owners to get information about brand symbols and locations where owned cattle are grazed.

LIVESTOCK SCOPING MEETINGS

The Yurok Tribe Wildlife Department (YTWD) will be hosting two scoping meetings with Yurok Tribe community members to discuss and receive input regarding the grazing of livestock on Tribal lands. The scoping sessions will relate to the potential for developing a Grazing Livestock management plan or regulation, and expanding the feral cattle removal program. YTWD is seeking feedback from interested Tribe members. We will hold two meetings virtually at 2:00 pm on Sunday May 2nd and Saturday May 8th. To access the meeting please use the following link:

<https://www.gotomeet.me/YurokWildlife>

YTWD will use the information and input from Tribal members to help guide the future of livestock management on Yurok lands during this initial planning stage. If you need assistance accessing the meeting, please contact YTWD biologist Preston Taylor at ptaylor@yuroktribe.nsn.us or (707) 954-9342.



#YurokStrong

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Joseph L. James, Chairman
of the Yurok Tribe



Tribe, partners on track to bring condors back



For the last 20 years, the Yurok Tribe has been actively engaged in the restoration of the rivers, forests and prairies in our ancestral territory. The reintroduction of the condor is one component of this effort to reconstruct the diverse environmental conditions that once existed in our region. We are extremely proud of the fact that our future generations will not know a world without prey-go-neesh. We are excited to work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Redwood National Park on the final stages of the project and beyond.



#YurokStrong

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Tiana Williams-Claussen,
Yurok Wildlife Department
Director



Tribe, partners on track to bring condors back



This is an extremely exciting day for the Yurok people. Over the last 12 years, the Yurok Wildlife Department has laid the groundwork to reintroduce the critically endangered condor to Yurok Country and the surrounding region. We are looking forward to working with our partners on completing the final stages of this project.



Longtime Fisheries Dept. Director retires

Yurok citizen, senior biologist hired to run the Department

When Yurok Fisheries Department Director Dave Hillemeier looks back on his 26 years with the Tribe, he is more than satisfied with his decision to dedicate the majority of his adult life to serving the Yurok people by taking actions to preserve and enhance the fisheries of the Klamath River.

"I've been extremely fortunate to work for the Tribe," Hillemeier explained. "There is no better place to work for a person who wants to do something good for the environment. The Yurok people have such strong values and consistently strive to do what is best for the natural world."

"Dave played an instrumental role in making the Fisheries Department one of the biggest and best river management-focused agencies on the West Coast. I would like to thank Dave for his sincere devotion to the Yurok people. He will always be a part of Team Yurok," said Joseph L. James, the Chairman of the Yurok Tribe.

Highly regarded by his staff and the people he served, Hillemeier led the Fisheries Department with his heart first and his critical mind a close second. The dyed-in-the-wool biologist was and always will be passionate about fish and his chosen profession. He was equally excited about building up his team and meeting their needs. Often responding to emails at 5am, Hillemeier worked extremely hard to advance the Department and to increase the Tribe's sphere of influence in the realm of fisheries, a task he unequivocally accomplished. He represented the Tribe on several fisheries and river management forums. In early April, the Tribal Council put on a virtual event to honor his many contributions to the Tribe. Every member of the Tribal Council and many staff expressed their appreciation for his work.

Hillemeier started his tenure with the Tribe in April of 1995 and formally retires on April 17, 2021. In the last quarter century, the Fisheries Department has grown at an exponential rate and barely resembles what it was when he accepted his first position with the Tribe as the Fisheries Harvest Manager. At the time, the Department had less than a dozen employees and one office. Currently, the Department has a staff of nearly 80 biologists,

restorationists and technicians, who work in four divisions, which are spread out along the lower Klamath and Trinity Rivers.

"When I first started working for the Tribe, I would have never imagined the Department growing into what it is today," Hillemeier said. "I give most if not all of the credit to the vision of Aawok Troy Fletcher."


Aawok Troy Fletcher was Hillemeier's first boss and a longtime friend. He ran the Department until 1999 when the universally respected tribal leader was selected to be the Tribe's Executive Director, where he completed two stints before his untimely passing in 2015.

"Aawok Troy laid the groundwork for the Department to evolve into the dynamic natural resources agency it is today. I am forever grateful that he took guys like me, Mike Belchik and others under his wing," Hillemeier said. "His legacy lives on in what we do."

Hillemeier also identified the talented Fisheries team as another driving force behind the development of the department. Within Fisheries' four divisions are many top-notch biologists, watershed restorationists and technicians, who are equally committed to restoring the ecological integrity of the Klamath Basin.



Dave Hillemeier stands with former Yurok Tribal Council Member Jack Mattz after a trip with the staff from two governors' offices.



“The Tribe has a really solid team of fisheries professionals. I am so proud of the work they do,” Hillemeier said. Fisheries’ world-class restoration crew is representative of the Department’s monumental transformation under Hillemeier’s leadership. Nearly two decades ago, the team was formed when Aawok Troy and others organized a heavy equipment training for Yurok citizens. Administered by Richard Nelson and Walt “Red Snake” Lara, the intensive, multi-day skill-building exercise introduced many Yurok people to this well-paying profession. Presently, there are several dozen highly qualified watershed restorationists/heavy equipment operators working for the Fisheries and Watershed Departments. The team has completed many landscape-scale projects on the Klamath and Trinity Rivers. In 2020 and 2021, due to the Department’s reputation for the building best-quality salmon habitat, it was invited to implement projects in the Sacramento River Basin. In the summers, the restoration crew worked in the Klamath Basin and spent the fall creating a better environment for fish in the Sacramento River Basin.

“The members of the restoration crew have a valuable skillset and they are able to support their families by restoring the river. It is as much of a win, win as you can get,” Hillemeier said. In addition to river restoration, the Fisheries Department is an authority in other areas too. The Department’s team of biologists are responsible for bringing in millions of much-needed grant dollars to the Tribe. These funds support scientific studies on salmon, Pacific lamprey and sturgeon. The Department is also conducting research on the effectiveness of its innovative approach to salmon habitat revitalization.

“Our Fisheries team has such a great track record that funding agencies are often willing to provide us with the dollars we need to do this important work,” Hillemeier said.

Throughout his time with the Department, Hillemeier witnessed a singular theme that sets the Yurok Fisheries Department and the Tribe as a whole apart from non-tribal organizations.

“With state and federal agencies, policies can shift depending on who’s in office. Throughout my entire career, the Tribe has consistently taken actions that are in favor of fisheries and natural resources,” Hillemeier said. “I studied fisheries biology because I wanted to do something positive for the environment. You can’t pick a better place than the Yurok Tribe if that is your priority.” Hillemeier has racked up many fond memories as the Fisheries Director, but two are the most prominent. The first is getting to witness the years when the salmon runs were strong enough for a

substantial commercial fishery.

“It is amazing to see what goes on down at Requa when there is a big run,” Hillemeier said. “It’s like a huge family reunion. Everyone has a smile on their face. You can see how much Yurok people love salmon and the river.”

The second most enduring recollection is a polar opposite of the first. On March 28 of 2002, a terrible drought year, the Tribe received word that Gale Norton, the sitting Secretary of the Interior, was going to open the head gates to the Klamath Irrigation Project the following day, despite a warning that a reduction in river flows would be catastrophic for salmon. Within 24 hours, a large group of concerned Yurok, Karuk and Hupa citizens were travelling in rented buses up to the project in Klamath Falls, where they admonished the interior secretary for putting fish in jeopardy.

“I really admire the sacrifices Yurok people make for the river. It was on full display that day in Klamath Falls,” Hillemeier recalled. “Unfortunately, less than six months later, what we told the Secretary of the Interior was going to happen, happened. The fish kill occurred in September of that year.”

The incoming Fisheries Department Director has also spent his entire adult life fighting for the Klamath. The new Director, Barry McCovey, is a Yurok citizen, a traditional culture bearer and a longtime Senior Fisheries Biologist. He has a bachelor’s degree in fisheries biology and he has been a key member of the Department for more than two decades. In addition to having much high-level management experience, McCovey has worked on numerous scientific research projects focused on an equally diverse set of topics, such as salmon disease issues and green sturgeon migration routes. Similar to Hillemeier, McCovey approaches everyone with the same warmth, dignity and compassion, it doesn’t matter if you are an intern or a US Congress member.

“Barry has been in training to be the future director of the department for the last 15 to 20 years. He is extremely well-rounded. His extensive professional background, combined with his deep appreciation for the river, make him the ideal person for the position. I feel great about him taking over the department,” Hillemeier said.

Although he is technically retired, Hillemeier will continue to contribute to the Tribe on a part-time basis. “My new position will be more focused on science, but I’m here to do whatever Barry needs from me,” concluded Hillemeier.



Group requests relief from Biden Admin

Klamath Basin faces one of the worst droughts in modern times

Klamath Basin, Oregon/California border – On Friday, April 16, a coalition of three Klamath Basin Tribes joined with groups that represent conservationists and commercial fishermen to urge the Biden administration to grant significant financial relief to all Klamath Basin communities in response to what is predicted to be the driest year on record for the region.

In this joint letter to President Biden, the groups urgently called for federal help to blunt the immediate disastrous economic consequences from impacts of the drought for farmers and ranchers as well as commercial and subsistence fishermen and Tribes. The letter requested investment in short-term measures to assist native species, including fish and birds, as well as longer-term infrastructure improvements designed to prevent similar disasters in future low-water years. In all, the groups have requested more than \$250 million in funding to address immediate economic losses and for helping to restore water balance to, and improve ecological conditions in, the drought-prone Klamath Basin.

The Klamath Basin straddles the Oregon-California border, encompassing an area roughly the size of Maryland. Historically it was home to the third largest salmon runs in the continental US, and still is a major stop on the “Pacific Flyway” supporting millions of migratory birds. The upper basin also includes about 220,000 acres of croplands served by the federal Klamath Irrigation Project, supporting hundreds of small farms whose families have lived and grown food there for several generations.

The Karuk Tribe, the Klamath Tribes of Oregon, the Yurok Tribe, American Rivers, California Waterfowl, California Trout, Fly Fishers International Northern California Council, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Associations (PCFFA), Sustainable Northwest, and Trout Unlimited sent the letter jointly. See below for quotes from representatives of these organizations. For more information, or to arrange an interview with a spokesperson who can speak to the details of the specific requests in the letter, contact Nina Erlich-Williams at nina@publicgoodpr.com.

“The Klamath Basin is in crisis,” said Russell “Buster” Attebery, Chairman of the Karuk Tribe. “This drought has the potential to irrevocably damage the already anguished ecosystems and economic viability of the area. Salmon are the lifeblood of the

Karuk people and play an integral role in our culture, ceremonies, and nourishment. We have watched our fisheries decline for decades and have done everything in our power to save them, but we have arrived at an impasse; there is nothing we can do to make the rain come. The Karuk Tribe is committed to working collaboratively to find solutions to this crisis and stands with fellow tribes, commercial fishermen, and conservationists in the call for disaster relief for all affected parties in the Klamath Basin.”

“All Klamath Basin communities will be hard hit this year by extreme drought, and need help to survive. Farmers are out of water, fisheries are closed, even Tribal basic subsistence fisheries are being curtailed,” said Glen Spain, Northwest Regional Director of PCFFA, which represents commercial family-owned salmon fishing operations on the west coast. “These communities are working together for their common cause. The Federal government could – and should – help them survive.”

“As the Klamath and much of the West faces unprecedented drought conditions, it’s critical to join together to adopt both temporary and permanent measures to ensure our communities can thrive without sacrificing a healthy environment,” said Greg Block, President of Sustainable Northwest.

“This year’s worst-case water crisis has the potential to cause enduring damage to the ecology of the Klamath River, the lifeline of the Yurok people. The severe drought also poses a serious threat our lifeway and livelihoods. In a few months, the Tribe will be cancelling our commercial salmon fishery for the fifth time to protect another record-low fish run, which will make it difficult to impossible for many of our families to pay basic bills and put food on the table,” Frankie Myers, the Yurok Tribe’s Vice Chairman. “Fish are the foundation of our traditional culture and the glue that holds our community together. We need to solve the Klamath’s water challenges before it is too late for the salmon. We are prepared to work with our neighboring tribes, ocean fishers and conservation partners on building a more resilient ecology and economy in the Klamath Basin.”

Star Student



Name: Drake Horn

Age: 12

School: McKinleyville Middle School

Drake Horn is a member of the Yurok Tribe and his family is from the village of Rek'Woy. Drake lives in McKinleyville with his Mom, Dad and two pets, a Maine Coon named Luigi and a French bulldog named Goose. Drake loves dinosaurs and all things gaming. His favorite game is either Fortnite or Roblox. Drake is active with Indian Education and loves to learn and present about cultural objects. He wants to learn how to dance traditionally once the dances return after enjoying watching them with his family before the pandemic.

Drake is in the 6th grade and is being highlighted for his hard work ethic and constant positive energy in class, even when things are hard because of COVID and he would rather be in person than on Zoom. Drake has maintained strong grades in distance learning but misses seeing his friends at recess. His favorite subjects are science and history. Drake wants to be a coder and Youtuber when he grows up so he loves to learn about technology too. Drake's big recommendation for other students during the pandemic is to take breaks when you need them and to go outside for a walk with your dog if you have one.

Thank you for the chance to be a Yurok Star Student!

Cigarettes are not earth-friendly

5 trillion cigarette butts are littering the natural world

The annual Earth Day Restore the Earth-themed events occurred April 20- 22, 2021. In line with these events, the Yurok Tribe's Health and Human Services Tobacco Wellness Project wants to share how the tobacco industry's commercial tobacco products cause harm not only to human health but also to human health harms the health of the earth and water.

At this moment, 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are littering our world. In California, cigarette butts comprise one-third (34%) of the total litter collected in trash pick-up events. Although cigarette butts are the most common tobacco waste, all commercial tobacco litter, such as cigarette cartons, packs, cellophane wrappers, plastic cigar tips, and chew containers, damages the water and the earth.

Cigarette filters are not safe and are not biodegradable. Cigarette butts are made of cellulose acetate, which is not biodegradable and traps the industry's toxic tobacco chemicals like arsenic and nicotine. When littered into the environment, harmful chemicals bleed into the land and water. Scientists have found cigarette filters in the stomach of fish, marine animals, birds, and land animals.

A newer commercial tobacco product, electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes or vapes), pose an even graver environmental threat. Because they are made of plastics, batteries, heavy metals, heating rods, and electronics, they need more energy and resources to manufacture and are non-biodegradable in their entirety. Essentially, as disposable computerized plastic products, they leach far more chemicals than the average toxic cigarette. E-cigarettes/vapes may end up being one of the biggest environmental tobacco threats facing communities and public health soon.

What can be done?

If you smoke or vape, seek support to quit. Making that brave move will help protect your health, family, community and protect the earth. If you need help to stop, call the California Smokers' Helpline 1-800-NO-BUTTS or visit their website www.nobutts.org. Now, the Helpline has a free vape quitting app too - visit www.novapes.org for more information.

If you are interested in getting involved in your community's efforts to protect the earth and end commercial tobacco waste, contact the Yurok Tobacco Wellness Project at ahillman@yuroktribe.nsn.us or at 530 625-4130 x1619. The Project will be hosting upcoming litter pick-up days, youth leadership projects, cultural wellness events, and advocacy training.

More information on commercial tobacco waste impact on the earth

<https://tobaccofreeca.com/topics/environment/>
<https://www.cigwaste.org>

SAVE THE DATES
MAY 18-22, 2021
VIRTUAL SPRING FLING
"mey-ge-tohl-kwo-poh"
"we take care of ourselves"
*Registration Opens April 30, 2021
education
activities
sharing
resources
prizes
music
self-care
brought to you by
Yurok Health and Human Services and the Yurok Wellness Coalition
For more information please contact
Melissa Mendoza at 707-482-1350 ex 1415
mmendoza@yuroktribe.nsn.us

VA Expands Virtual Services for Veterans

Veterans continue to receive benefits and services after VA's Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) temporarily closed its 56 regional offices to the public March 19 in response to COVID-19.

"The decision to close our offices to the general public, is part of the VA's effort to limit exposure to vulnerable populations like our older Veterans and those with underlying medical conditions, as identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "VA is expanding existing technologies to remain accessible to Veterans, service members and their families."

Changes

Many in-person services are already available via the phone or online through virtual options like VA Video Connect. VBA has and continues to adjust to ensure the safety and well-being of its clients and staff. The changes include:

Uninterrupted GI Bill payments so students continue to receive their benefits unaffected by any change from in-person to online learning.

- Supporting students for educational counseling through online and telephone services.
- Connecting Veterans to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services through teleconferencing; providing case management and general counseling virtually through VA Video Connect.
- Informal conference hearings by telephone or video conferencing when needed.
- Collecting information to process fiduciary claims by telephone. When necessary other accommodations will be arranged.
- Collecting information remotely via phone or teleconference when possible, to process grant requests for special adaptive housing.
- Conducting examinations for disability benefits using tele-compensation and pension or "tele-C&P" exams. If an in-person examination is required, Veterans will be notified for scheduling.

Effective March 30, VA will discontinue VA benefit briefings and services on military installations for transitioning service members and their families through the interagency Transition Assistance Program (TAP) until further notice. However, VA will provide virtual briefings and individualized counseling for transitioning service members where possible. Service members who have not received these briefings, as required by TAP, may access the Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) platform and register for "TGPS-US006: VA Benefits and Services."

Veterans with specific questions can call 1-800-827-1000 or go www.ebenefits.va.gov for additional details. Veterans can continue to get information about benefits, file a claim online or can call for claim-specific questions.

Visit VA's website for information and updates regarding VA's response to COVID-19.

Military Observances

April

Month of the Military Child

An opportunity to recognize military children and youth for their heroism, character, courage, sacrifices and continued resilience.

April 5, 2020 - Gold Star Wives Day

In 2013, the U.S. Senate designated April 5 as Gold Wives Day in recognition of the sacrifices made by spouses and family members of our fallen heroes.

April 14 - Air Force Reserve Birthday

Since President Harry S. Truman called for the formation of the Air Force Reserve in 1948, it has been a critical part of the nation's defense. Its mission is to provide combat ready forces to Fly, Fight and Win.

April 23 - Army Reserve Birthday

What began in 1908 as a small corps of medical professionals held in readiness for duty is today the Army's global operational reserve force, with a presence in all 50 states, five U.S. Territories and 20 Time Zones across the globe.

May

National Military Appreciation Month

A month to recognize and show appreciation to the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

May 1 - Silver Star Service Banner Day

A day set aside to honor our wounded, ill, and dying military personnel by participating in flying a Silver Star Banner.

May 8 - VE (Victory in Europe) Day

On May 8, 1945, both Great Britain and the United States celebrate Victory in Europe Day. Cities in both nations, as well as formerly occupied cities in Western Europe, put out flags and banners, rejoicing **in the defeat of the Nazi war machine during World War II.**

May 8 - Military Spouse Appreciation Day

A day set aside to acknowledge the contributions and sacrifices of the spouses of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Attention Veterans and Active Duty Military! Do we have your current address? We'll be sending out important information that you don't want to miss! The Yurok Tribal Court's Veterans Wellness Coordinator is available to help veterans connect to resources for which they may be eligible. Contact Jessica Wolsfeld at (707) 951-5425 or jwolsfeld@yuroktribe.nsn.us.



Yurok Tribe

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THE YUROK TRIBE, UIHS AND DEL NORTE COUNTY PUT ON A MASS VACCINATION EVENT IN KLAMATH. GET VACCINATED TODAY.