

APRIL EDITION



# Yurok Today

The Voice of the Yurok People



## CULTURAL FIRE RETURNS TO RESERVATION

CULTURAL FIRE MANAGEMENT COUNCIL SPARKS 176 ACRE BURN • SEE STORY ON PAGE 6





**VICE CHAIRPERSON**  
**SUSAN MASTEN**

Dear Tribal Members, this column is meant to keep you updated on the activities of the Tribe. Please let me know what type of information you want or concerns you may have about our Tribal government, programs or services. You will also be able to see this column on the Tribe's website and Facebook page in an effort to reach out and provide information to you in a timely way.

### **Klamath Boulevard Update**

I am excited to announce that we will begin in June construction on yet another project in Klamath. When the Klamath Boulevard Gateway Project is finished, the well-trafficked thoroughfare will be wonderfully landscaped, appropriately lit and will reflect the pride we put into designing Redwood Hotel Casino and Abalone Bar & Grill. The project involves many much needed improvements to the busy boulevard, including: three center medians, nine new crosswalks, 40 solar-paneled street lights, sidewalks extensions on both sides of the road and dozens of native flowering shrubs and trees. We are also developing a plan to further increase Klamath Blvd's aesthetic appeal and add educational elements, such as kiosks, containing information about our cultural heritage. The Planning and Community Development Department secured a National Endowment of the Arts "Our Town" grant to fund this plan.

### **Cultural burn update**

The cultural burns conducted this spring were a complete success. Over the last 100 years, the absence of fire on Yurok lands has created a number of negative ecological and social challenges in Yurok Country. I am elated to see so many young Yuroks learning how to use this traditional forest management tool, which will heal the landscape. The prescribed fire project, led by the Cultural Fire Management Council and supported by the Yurok Tribe, treated with fire 176 acres of forest. The fire fighters focused on restoring stands of hazel and tanoak and removing dangerous dry brush from around elders' homes. I am grateful for the hard work put in by our Yurok Wildland Fire Department's fire fighters, who were all able to up their qualifications, during the burn. Yurok Wildland Fire is comprised of all Tribal members and the crew is one giant step closer to being able to facilitate large-scale burns.

This was truly a community effort. I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to the Cultural Fire Management Council and the following volunteers for contributing to this historic effort: Bertha Peters, Bob McConnell, Alita Redner, Dustin Offins, Joe Tyner, Marie Robbins, Rick O'Rourke, Isaac Scott, Buddy Bear Jr. Monique Sonoquie, Richard Myers, Skip Lowry, Jason Price Sr., Jason Price Jr., Steven Osborne, Dylan Sullivan, Andrew Somers, Mid Klamath Watershed Council and the Tribal Civilian Community Corps from Hoopa. Special recognition to Elizabeth Azzuz for providing logistical support, keeping records and coordinating with other agencies to let them know of the fire activity.

### **Update Finalizing MOU cross deputization with DN Co and new Sheriff**

I am happy to announce that we are very close to finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Del Norte County Sheriff's Office. This important agreement, once finalized, will

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**Andy Lamebear is a Yurok Wildland Firefighter and he is lighting a cultural burn.**

have many positive implications for local Tribal members and those who live well beyond the Yurok Reservation border line. Once our Public Safety Officers are cross-deputized, the Del Norte Sheriff's deputies will be able to better police the rest of Del Norte County because our officers will be able to uphold state law on the Yurok Reservation. Public Safety will soon be able to intervene and make an arrest if a situation arises where a non-tribal member commits a crime against a Yurok. This is especially critical for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. I'd like to recognize new Sheriff, Erik Apperson for keeping his campaign promise to streamline this process. I look forward to working with Sheriff Apperson to figure out new and innovative ways in which to collaborate on our collective goal of keeping our community safe for our families.

### **Work with DOI to address HYSA and law enforcement needs**

The Yurok Tribal Council is working with the US Department of the Interior to address two issues, pertaining to the Hoopa/Yurok Settlement Agreement, specifically related to economic self-sufficiency and law enforcement. The HYSA contains a provision to provide funding for the Tribe to carry out an economic self-sufficiency plan. We are working on this plan now and will be submitting it to DOI in the near future. This economic blueprint will build upon our current initiatives to create living-wage jobs for Yurok Tribal members. We are also working to secure the remaining dollars for land acquisition under the Act.

As you all know, there is a substantial, illegal cannabis cultivation issue on and near the Reservation. The marijuana growers, most of whom are from the East Coast, are responsible for an uptick in serious crime. These unlawful, large-scale operations are also stealing from our community water systems and polluting the little water that is left in the creeks. Some of the growers have even set up shop in our ceremonial areas. This is unacceptable. It is costly to remove and remediate these large grow sites, many of which contain several miles of plastic pipe and many tons of trash, including hazardous waste. During last summer's, largely successful Operation Yurok, we were able to cut down many of the larger grows, but more work needs to be done. We are seeking funding to address this issue and other law enforcement needs, such as additional officers to add protection for upriver communities. The Tribe is also continuing to coordinate with the State of California, US Attorney's Office, local law enforcement and the National Guard to address water theft and environmental impacts associated with these illegal grows.

I hope this newsletter finds you in good health and spirits. We also send our prayers and thoughts to each of you who may have lost a loved one during this time.

**Wok-hlew ✨**

# Attn. Yurok veterans

Filing for veterans' benefits, and appealing decisions on claims, can be time-consuming and confusing. But with the recent roll-out of new, streamlined claims processes, applying for veterans benefits now promises to be faster, easier and more accurate.

The changes involve:

- new requirements to use standardized forms for filing for benefits
- a new form for appealing decisions
- a new "intent to file" a claim process for those who need more time to gather information while preserving an effective date for benefits

*If you're a veteran or you know a vet, or a survivor who has put off applying for benefits because it was too difficult, encourage them to visit [explore.va.gov](http://explore.va.gov) and check out the new ways to file for claims. ✨*

# SAVE THE DATE

## KLAMATH SALMON FESTIVAL SATURDAY AUGUST 22, 2015

## ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING SUNDAY, AUGUST 23, 2015

# Ethics Review Board convenes in Klamath

## *Oversight committee, including tribal elders, finds zero ethical violations*

On Thursday, April 2, 2015 the Yurok Tribe convened the first ever Ethics Review Board. The Board reviewed five cases, none of which resulted in a finding that an ethical violation had occurred.

The Ethics Review Board is an oversight committee, whose members evaluate the Tribal Council's compliance with the Tribal Council Ordinance, a stringent law designed to increase government transparency and hold tribal leaders to the highest of ethical standards. The tribal statute, vetted at nine public meetings, covers everything from mismanagement of funds to being tardy to Council meetings. Failure to follow the ordinance carries strict sanctions. The Ethics Review Board, consists of the following positions: two elders, Chair or Vice Chair, two Councilmembers, Yurok Chief Justice and a representative from the Office of the Tribal Attorney. Executive Director Troy Fletcher serves as the facilitator/prosecutor. The elders, chief justice and senior attorney essentially act as judge and jury. The Board met for two, two-hour sessions at Yurok Tribal Headquarters in Klamath. The elders who participated in the first hearing were John Melvin and Lavina Bowers. Senior attorney Nathan Voegeli represented OTA. The Tribal Council participants were Vice Chair Susan Masten and Pecwan District Rep. Mindy Natt. Elders Maria Tripp and Roberta Lindgren served at the second inquiry, along with varying combinations of the following Tribal Councilmembers, including: Chairman Thomas P. O'Rourke Sr., Vice Chair Masten, Pecwan Rep. Natt and South District Rep. Mattz.

At each hearing, both the respondents and complainants were allowed time to make their respective cases. The burden of proof set forth by the ordinance is defined as a preponderance of evidence, which means that for there to be a negative finding, more than 50 percent of the information presented must demonstrate that misconduct did occur. The same standard is employed in most civil courts, such as custody and divorce court.

The purpose of each hearing was to determine if eight Tribal Councilmembers' activities were consistent with tenets outlined in the Tribal Council Ordinance. Three Tribal Councilmembers had to reschedule for May 27, 2015. Orick District Rep. Larry Hendrix had to reschedule because of a surgery. East District Rep. Laura Borden was sick. South District Rep. Lana McCovey could not make it due to a family obligation. Weitchpec District Rep. Thomas Willson was

not present, because of a family obligation, but he consented to a hearing, despite his absence. The Councilmembers present included: Chairman Thomas O'Rourke Sr., Vice Chair Susan Masten, North District Rep. Jack Mattz and Pecwan District Rep. Mindy Natt. Upon completion of the five hearings, which lasted about 20-minutes each, the Ethics Review Board concluded that none of the Council members had committed an ethical violation. Two Councilmembers, Chairman O'Rourke and Pecwan Rep. Mindy Natt, were determined to be in compliance with the Tribal Council Ordinance. The remaining four were found to be in technical noncompliance for negligible violations of the ordinance, however, all of the Councilmembers had corrected the small infractions in a timely manner. The minor violations were for turning in receipts, later than the mandatory ten business day deadline required by the ordinance, for routine purchases of food and parking passes.

"An ethics violation requires a black heart," said Yurok Chief Justice Abby Abinanti. "This is simply bad bookkeeping. I think all of these could have been handled in-house, by policy."

Nearly all of the elders, Executive Director Troy Fletcher and the Tribal Councilmembers agreed with Judge Abinanti's statement.

"I pursued this ordinance to build trust and ensure accountability in the tribal government," said Thomas P. O'Rourke, Chairman of the Yurok Tribe. "I think we went too far in some instances."

This was the first, real-world application of the Tribal Council Ordinance, and the first opportunity to examine its efficacy. It was decided that extraneous violations, such a late receipts for approved purchases, did not meet the threshold for an ethics violation. Unless it is a recurring issue, these petty infractions will likely not be heard at the next Ethics Review Board proceeding. The four elders, who participated on the board, will be reviewing the Council Ordinance for any necessary amendments. If the elders make a recommendation to the Tribal Council for consideration, the proposed modifications will go out for public hearings with the Tribal membership.

"Part of what we did was take this ordinance for a test drive," said Troy Fletcher Executive Director of the Yurok Tribe and facilitator/prosecutor for the board. "I am almost embarrassed to bring such minor violations to the board, but at the end of the day, we have to be transparent." ❄

***"I pursued this ordinance to build trust and ensure accountability for the Tribal Council and tribal government."***

• Thomas P. O'Rourke Sr. Chairman of the Yurok Tribe



# Director provides fix for achievement gap

## *Plan will help more American Indian students graduate*

**JIM MCQUILLEN**

**Yurok Education Program Director**

When we really define the academic achievement gap locally, one glaring gap that continues to need attention is the disproportionate graduation rates for American Indian students in Del Norte County, including Yurok students, within the county. The three-year cohort graduation rate in Del Norte for all students is 77.3 percent. For American Indians in Del Norte the three-year cohort graduation rate is 66.3 percent. This is an 11-point difference (or a 15 percent gap in achievement) over the previous three-year cohort graduation rates, according to the DataQuest system at the California Department of Education. Surely the graduation rates for the American Indian student group can be one of the measurements considered in the current Local Control Funding Formula debate occurring this spring in Del Norte's County's school district, especially since graduation is one of the primary goals for the K-12 school system.

The cohort graduation rate is the number of students entering ninth grade and the number graduating four years later from the same group. The county cohort graduation rate is a more accurate method to look at graduation rates compared to simply looking at the single school graduation rate, according to the state. We must be careful not to overstate the graduation rate of Del Norte County High School since the students who are at risk of not graduating are transferred out to alternative schools before they drop out, thus leaving Del Norte High School with an inflated graduation rate because the at-risk students have transferred out. The county cohort graduation rate looks at the entire group of incoming ninth graders and how many graduate four years later from the same group. This is more accurate.

The achievement gap is compounded by other factors, such as a disproportionate rate of poverty and out-of-home placements for some students. This is especially true considering the disproportionately high rates of low-income tribal children who qualify for the school district's free or reduced lunch program from our local tribes and the large percent of American Indian children placed in the foster care system locally. The school district has identified 40 percent of all students in foster placements are American Indian children in Del Norte schools. If you include tribal court placements, informal placements and kinship placements in the American Indian community, the percent is even more alarming. The low-income students and students in foster homes require

additional programs and intervention services and data tracking under the new Local Control Funding Formula state law.

Over the years the number of American Indian students needing to transfer out of Del Norte High School due to being at risk of dropping out has been alarming and disproportionate. American Indian students have been departing DNHS in large numbers, and they need to in order to actually graduate. They end up in the alternative programs and alternative schools that have been put in place to prevent a student from dropping out. These include Sunset Continuation High School, the successful Ta-Ah-Dun magnet program, Castle Rock and other county alternative schools. The menu of options as well the dropout prevention strategies need to be examined within Del Norte High in order to better serve American Indian students to try and keep them at the school, as well as assist them in graduating from Del Norte High. Perhaps more specific curriculum or courses of interest that reach American Indian students and enrich all students with the history and culture of the Yurok and Tolowa cultures would help keep our American Indian students at DNHS and reduce this glaring gap in achievement.

Tribes also want to see their own members become teachers and role models at local schools and see the community configuration reflected in the district staff. Currently only 3 percent (or 11) of the more than 250 teachers within the Del Norte County self-report to be of American Indian descent, yet the student population is about 15 percent.

Local tribes are making great strides in building their governments and businesses to become more self-sufficient, and the local tribes are attempting to attract their own tribal members into successful, meaningful jobs and careers. They are very willing and able to manage their own sustainable resources and affairs. Local tribes are very interested in their tribal member student performance. The tribes are tracking the academic performance of their member students through the ACLU Settlement agreement (extension) and with the annual American Indian Report Card. Local tribes are also celebrating the success of their students' achievements when they graduate from high school and/or college. Last year the Yurok Tribe, California's largest tribe, had over 50 high school graduates in the region, although this number is much lower than what it should be, and 25 Yurok members completed a college degree; the tribe held three different community celebrations to ensure families had the opportunity to celebrate these important graduation achievements. ✨

# CFMC sparks comprehensive fire plan

*This year's first cultural burn nets 176 acres on upper Reservation*

The traditional use of fire stimulates the production of strong basket making materials. It creates copious forage for animals large and small. The strategic use of flame increases tree growth and the forest's capacity to sequester carbon dioxide. It accelerates acorn production. This singular forest management tool can even protect a community from a calamitous wildfire.

In early March, several severely needed cultural burns, brought about by the Cultural Fire Management Council (CFMC), were conducted on the upper Reservation. The planned use of low intensity fire was employed for many reasons, especially those listed above, and more importantly, to increase the capacity of the Yurok Wildland Fire crew and the community to facilitate large-scale prescription burn operations. The fires are part of an extensive plan — in its second year of implementation — supported by Terra Fuego, a California based nonprofit, the Yurok tribe, the Nature Conservancy's Fire Learning Network, and Firestorm. This is the first long-term initiative, in more than 100 years, to restore the role of fire in Yurok Country. The U.S. government, which is just now starting to recognize the positive results prescribed fire produces, banned the complex cultural practice in the early 1900s.

The Yurok Wildland Fire crew, headed by Yurok tribal member Clyde Trimble, played a leading role in executing the operation. During the four-day training exchange, called Yurok TRES, four properties and 176 acres on the upper Reservation, were treated with fire. The operation targeted old hazel stands, acorn gathering spots and thick, fire-prone brush surrounding elders' homes. A dozen men and women, whose fire training was sponsored by the CFMC, volunteered to participate in the cultural burn. Their hard work in the taxing terrain, building fire lines and igniting fires was so impressive that some were offered jobs with Firestorm Inc., a principal participant in the project. Trimble, a Captain, received his Firing Boss certification, during the operation.

"This year's burns and training exchange were a great success," said Yurok Tribal Councilmember Thomas Willson. "It's all about restoration — restoration of our land and restoration of our culture."

"I thought it went really great. We trained up a lot of local people in Basic 32. The people who already had Basic 32 upped their qualifications as well," added Margo Robbins, CFMC President, and Yurok tribal member. "The Yurok Tribe, Terra Fuego and Firestorm did an excellent job. We are especially thankful to The Nature Conservancy for supporting our effort to restore fire as a



**Jason Price Jr. puts fire on the ground, during the cultural burn.**

land management tool within the ancestral territory of the Yurok Tribe."

"I am honored to be a part of this movement to bring fire back to the Yurok landscape. Learning the traditions and working with the Yurok people has brought me closer to the land and the Creator," said Jim Wills, Fire Boss and prescribed fire conservationist. "We can restore the land by working together and carrying fire down the mountain one strip at a time."

Terra Fuego and Firestorm Inc, in charge of the training aspect of the project, are some of the best in the business of prescribed fire.

"They are experts in their field," CFMC President Robbins said.

Volunteers like Yurok tribal member Jason Price Jr., soaked up the training and put an amazing amount of effort into making this a prosperous project.

"If I could, I'd hire Jason Jr. in a heartbeat," said Captain/Firing Boss Trimble. "He is a very hard worker and catches on fast."

On each of the four days that fire was used, Elizabeth A. Azzuz, secretary for the CFMC, tribal member and logistics manager for the operation, informed all relevant agencies about the planned fires, letting everyone know that they were part of a training activity. The medical professional, who worked 12-15 hour days during the burn, also monitored the crew's safety, learned to ride a quad as well as how to use a drip torch.

"I think it went really well. The TRES was a great learning experience. I tried to learn everything I could, along with my other





duties,” Azzuz said.

Yuroks are a fire-adapted people. The Tribe has used flame, since time immemorial, to accomplish a broad range of forest management goals, including: making villages fire safe, rejuvenating prairies, fertilizing the forest, producing strong basket materials and much more.

“I grew up burning even though it was illegal. My father raised us to care for the land, so it will take care of us,” said Azzuz, who was born in the village of Weych-pus. “It was my father’s dream to put fire on the land again. I see it happening and it’s really exciting.”

Cultural burns can also be used to control acorn and hazel pest problems. Arielle Halpern, a Ph.D. candidate from UC Berkeley is currently conducting a study, with the support of the Yurok Tribe, to assess the impact cultural burning has on two pests, the Filbert worm (*Cydia latiferriana*) and the Filbert Weevil (*Curculio occidentalis*). In one site on Yurok lands, more than 90 percent of acorns were infested by insects, which make the incredibly important food inedible. The larvae of both bugs attack hazel and acorn nuts, which drop prematurely as result of infection. The low burning fires, when properly timed, essentially cremate the metamorphic insects before they have a chance to reproduce. If fire is applied again the following year, populations plummet even further, bringing balance back to the tanoak and Douglas fir, madrone dominated forests.

The acorn, specifically from the tanoak tree, is one of the most commonly consumed, traditional staples. The tanoak, a generator of biodiversity, is also an irreplaceable part of the forest ecosystem. The nut, sweetened by leaching, is a near perfect food. It is packed with protein and beneficial fats. Acorns are a healthy source of carbohydrates, too. Tanoak seeds also contain many vitamins and minerals, such as B6 and magnesium. In non-drought years, an old tanoak tree can produce up to 110,000 acorns, providing a sustainable, organic and abundant source of nutrition.

“Cultural burning is also about food security. The acorn is one of the best things we can put in our bodies. Healthy tanoak stands are a vital part of food security,” said Weitchpec District Rep. Willson. “We cannot depend on the market for food. The food there no longer contains any real nutritional value.”

Tanoak acorns sustain a wide variety of mammals and birds, including, deer, band-tailed pigeons and western gray squirrels. Salamanders, flickers and northern flying squirrels use the tree for resting, nesting and cover. Predators like the mountain lion benefit from big crops of acorns, which maintain healthy populations of prey animals. Deer, another vital traditional resource, depend on acorns for up to a quarter of their fall diet and for putting on weight for the winter months.

The tanoak tree is also host to several dozen different types of

fungi, most notably the tanoak mushroom, another commonly consumed, customary comestible. The fungus fruits in the late fall and it also provides crucial calories, especially when acorns are short supply, for black-tails and many other mammals.

The importance of tanoaks to Yurok people cannot be understated. These trees are the beating heart of a balanced, temperate ecosystem. Directly or indirectly, they provide nourishment for almost every living thing in forest, ranging from microorganisms in the soil to the large mammals that live on top of it.

Hazel is another critical cultural resource. The summer-harvested nuts have a high nutritional value. Traditionally, Yuroks made a drink from the hazelnut, which was used under certain circumstances, to replace mother’s milk. The tall shrub, like all other nut producing plants, requires proper stewardship to prompt peak production. Low to medium intensity fires spawns better seed bearing capacity. It also spurs new, bug-free growth from the crown of plants. These new sprouts are used for weaving traditional baskets. Baby baskets, for example, require several dozen strong sticks for just the frame of the basket, while countless other smaller sticks are used for weaving the middle. If hazel is not managed with fire, the stems become bug-ridden, brittle and useless for making baskets. Basket makers need shoots that grow straight up out of the ground, not bushes with many branches.

“The amount of hazel that we burned was really substantial,” said CFMC Secretary Azzuz.

Already, new hoo-leehl (hazel sticks) are ascending from last year’s burn plots, as are a number of native plants that could not grow there before, because dense brush blocked light from hitting the forest floor.

### **Reducing the risk of wildfire**

The traditional use of fire is the most effective means of reducing the exposure of the Yurok community, infrastructure and tribal investments to an uncontrollable conflagration. CAL FIRE recently accessed the “fire hazard severity” on the Yurok Reservation. According to the analysis, the risk of wildfire on the Reservation and surrounding area, located in what used to be called the “asbestos forest”, is rated at high to very high. Specifically, the area between Klamath Glenn and Wautec was rated at top of the severity spectrum.

There are three factors driving the elevated fire threat. The geography, vast quantity of damage done to the forests by logging operations and the lack of traditional fire all contribute to the soaring possibility of a large fire. Fire experts believe a situation like the Biscuit Fire, the most costly in the region’s history, could

happen here, according to Ben Riggan, an advisor to the CFMC. The 2002 fire started after a lightning storm hit Southern Oregon at a time when the majority of the country's fire fighters were off at other incidents. Dry winds and high fuel density compelled the fire to scorch a half million acres, an area several times the size of the Reservation.

The community is very much in favor of the CFMC plan to restore fire to the land and would like to see the effort excel and expand. During the cultural burns, numerous community members approached firefighters to ask if their property could be burned as well.

"The community is excited about getting fire back on the land. Their properties are choked out with brush because of the fire suppression policy," said CFMC President Robbins. "They are really happy that the CFMC and the Tribe are moving it forward. It's not just a dream anymore."

Prior to the logging boom, the woodlands in Yurok Ancestral Territory, traditionally managed by the Tribe for millennia, were comprised of massive, moderately spaced trees. These bounty-full forests, bisected by biologically rich oak-studded grasslands, were home to the tallest trees on the planet. The resulting animal and plant diversity was greater here, than almost any other place on earth. The size and spacing of the trees, in addition to the seasonal burning of both forest and prairie land, made it nearly impossible for a catastrophic fire to take root.

"My dad and my uncles told us how open the forest was. You could look left and look right and see for a long distance," Azzuz explained. "You can't do that anymore."

While the cultural burns should never have been outlawed on Yurok lands, the timing of the revitalization of this traditional practice is significant. Four years of extreme drought on the Yurok Reservation have further raised the risk of fire danger. The long view is not much better. Top climate change scientists predict that the length of the fire season and the ferocity of the fires are going to increase in the coming years. In the beginning of January 2014, Reservation residents were given a glimpse of what the future will likely hold. An unprecedented wildfire, 15 miles east of Arcata, burned more than 300 acres.

In this coming fire season, the cultural burns areas, will act as fire barriers. The flame treated acres are now bare of the flammable brush that carries fire through the forest. If the whole of Yurok ancestral territory was surrounded by these natural fire breaks, the fire danger, even in drought, would drastically diminish. The Cultural Fire Management Council seeks to expand exponentially the number of acres burned each year. As the amount of acreage swells, so will the number of local, living-wage fire-related jobs. As early as next year, job opportunities could be offered to Reservation



Isaac Scott, a volunteer did difficult and demanding work at the spring cultural burn.

residents, according to the CFMC. By the end of the five-year project, the Yurok Wildland Fire Crew will be ready to safely burn big units, and teach other Tribes this important forest stewardship skill.

The Yurok Fire crew has now completed with professionalism and precision several prescribed fires. Yurok fire fighters are comfortable doing the difficult labor, which is often accomplished under a shroud of heat and smoke. They are also more than proficient in performing the more technical tasks such as operating the fire engine, pump matrix and weather measuring instruments.

"It is way easier now," said Yurok fire fighter Andy Lamebear. "Actually, all of it is pretty easy now."

**Other volunteers included: Bertha Peters, Bob McConnell, Alita Redner, Dustin Offins, Joe Tyner, Marie Robbins, Rick O'Rourke, Isaac Scott, Buddy Bear Jr. Monique Sonoquie, Skip Lowry, Jason Price Sr., Jason Price Jr., Steven Osborne, Dylan Sullivan and Andrew Somers. Members of the Orleans-based, Mid Klamath Watershed Council played a vital role the burn, and the nonprofit also loaned the CFMC tools, prescription burn road signs and drip torches. The Tribal Civilian Community Corps from Hoopa was another instrumental part of the project. The Hoopa TCCC helped cut fire lines around the burn units. ✨**





(left) Marty Lamebear and Brody Richardson are part of the Yurok Wildland Fire Crew.



Clyde Trimble is the Captain/ Fireing Boss of the Yurok Wildland Fire Crew.



# Tribe hires new Env. Program Director

*Louisa McCovey, a Yurok, is well versed in both TEK and Western science*

To look at Louisa McCovey is to see the future of the Yurok Tribe. She is culturally knowledgeable and college-educated. She also has extensive experience in her profession: environmental protection. That is why the Tribal member was recently hired as the Director of the Yurok Environmental Program.

“Working as my own Tribe’s Environmental Director is very humbling and is a huge responsibility,” said McCovey, who started leading YTEP in January. “Personally, as a Yurok Tribal member, there is no greater obligation than to protect our water, land and resources because the health of our environment is essential to our own health and wellbeing.”

The new Environmental Director is an example of a sea change that is occurring in Yurok Country. Those in her generation, the progeny of culturally connected parents, embrace their identity as Yurok people, and the responsibilities intrinsic to being a member of the Tribe. One of those inherent obligations is to be a good guardian of Yurok ancestral territory.

McCovey, born and raised in Hoopa, consciously began cultivating, at a young age, the unique skillset that made it possible for her to become the respected environmental professional she is today. Right out of high school the environmental scientist started working for the Yurok Fisheries Program, doing technical work on river restoration projects. In short succession, McCovey enrolled at Humboldt State University, where she completed a degree in Environmental Science/First Nations Environmental Protection. Throughout her college career during breaks, she gained valuable experience working as a Fisheries Technician and Environmental Intern. Upon graduation, she acquired eight years of natural resource protection experience working for the Hoopa Tribal Environmental Protection Agency. There, she gained a global understanding of tribal environmental programs and procured a panoply of pertinent experience, ranging from data collection and interpretation to grant writing and administration, and all things in between.

During the last ten years, the Yurok Environmental Program has exponentially expanded the scope of its work, diversified in the ways that it serves the Tribal membership and increased the numbers and expertise of the staff. What was once a small department, comprised of few employees, focusing on water quality and timber company pesticide use, is now a model environmental protection program that is recognized throughout Indian Country and beyond. The Program, which is completely grant



**Louisa McCovey is the Director of the Yurok Environmental Program.**

funded, has three divisions, including: Water, Community and Ecosystems and Pollution Prevention. Cleaning up old dump sites, monitoring air quality and providing burn permits are just a few of the many facets of the Tribe’s Environmental Program in 2015. YTEP also conducts large-scale studies into issues as complex as climate change, harmful algae blooms and the human health impacts associated with consuming certain traditional foods that have the potential to contain specific, industrial toxins.

As Environmental Director, McCovey plans to stay the course and continue growing the program, so that it can implement new natural resource protection-related initiatives, provide more actionable scientific information to the Tribal membership and remove sources of pollution, before it makes it into the Klamath River and its tributaries.



“The most important goal of YTEP is to protect and enhance environmental quality on the Yurok Reservation for existing and future generations of Yurok people,” McCovey said. “We are responsible for the protection and enhancement of clean water, land and air. I plan to continue that work with sound, reputable science and data collection, traditional knowledge and environmental regulation.”

In addition to her degree in Western science and more than a decade’s worth of real-world experience, McCovey, brings to the table a rich understanding of Traditional Ecological Knowledge. TEK, in part, views the natural world as a complex and connected constellation of constantly interacting organisms. It is based on respect for the interconnectedness and sentient nature of all things, reciprocal relationships with the environment, generational learning and long range thinking. This sophisticated approach to science, which also contains a spiritual component, identifies humans as an elemental part of the ecosystem, not a dominator of it.

Practitioners of Traditional Ecological Knowledge understand that each part of our ecosystem, has a purpose and a relationship to the whole, which is why TEK is such an important tool when it comes to environmental protection, McCovey explained.

“TEK is inherent to our traditional way of life and to finally have it defined and available to guide policy and decision making is an incredible tool for tribes to use,” McCovey said.

McCovey, who is also Karuk/Hupa descendent, wants to see Yurok Country restored, as much as possible, to pre-contact condition, so that wild game abundantly populate the landscape, fish flourish in the river and pristine basket-making materials, as well as edible mushrooms and plants are easy to find — so that Yurok people can continue their traditional lifeways.

“Respect for the environment is a moral that was instilled in me at a very young age, one that I have to thank my parents and ancestors for, and one that I try to teach my own children,” McCovey explained. “Growing up, my parents made sure my siblings and I were outside, hunting, gathering, working and just having fun. I think that’s where my love and passion for nature began.”

McCovey, whose family is from the village of Wahsek, is also a participant in tribal ceremonies.

“Through our ceremonies as Yurok People we Fix the Earth and pray for world renewal and balance. I am honored to work as the Tribe’s Environmental Director because I not only get to help Fix the Earth through ceremony; I get to do it every day, professionally - with science. I think our place here on the Klamath River is one of the most beautiful and ecologically important places on earth and I think it’s worth protecting. I know our river will someday be healed and if I can be a part of that healing, I will feel like I’ve done my part to make the world a better place. I think we all should be a part of it,” concluded McCovey. ✨

## IMPORTANT DATES

UIHS Dental clinic- Apr. 27-30 - Weitchpec  
 TANF Training - May 1 - 11am-2pm -Weitchpec  
 YIHA Homebuyers class - May 2 -10:30am to 4pm - Weitchpec  
 Tai-Chi - May 5 - 5pm-7pm - Weitchpec  
 TERO Rep. - May 6 - 11am-3pm - Weitchpec

\*Tribal Council Meeting (planning) May 6. - 10am - Klamath

\*Tribal Council Meeting (action) May 7. -10am - Klamath

Yurok Language - May 7 - 3pm-5pm-Weitchpec  
 UIHS Tea Party - May 8 - 4pm-6pm - Weitchpec  
 Tai-Chi - May 12 - 5pm-6pm - Weitchpec  
 TERO Rep. - May 13- 11am-3pm - Weitchpec  
 Yurok Language - May 14 - 3pm-5pm-Weitchpec



**YUROK TRIBAL MEMBER  
 FLINT ROCK  
 MOST VALUABLE PLAYER  
 2015 JAYCEES TOURNEY**

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- Adventurers Club Representative
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- Security Officer II
- Security Supervisor
- Slot Attendant
- Slot Floor Supervisor
- Slot Technician

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# Blue/Bear Creek land deal finalized

## *Tribe recovers management role of 6,500 acres in ancestral territory*

The Yurok Tribe recently finalized an agreement to take back management of a large tract of forested land in the salmon-critical Blue and Bear Creek watersheds.

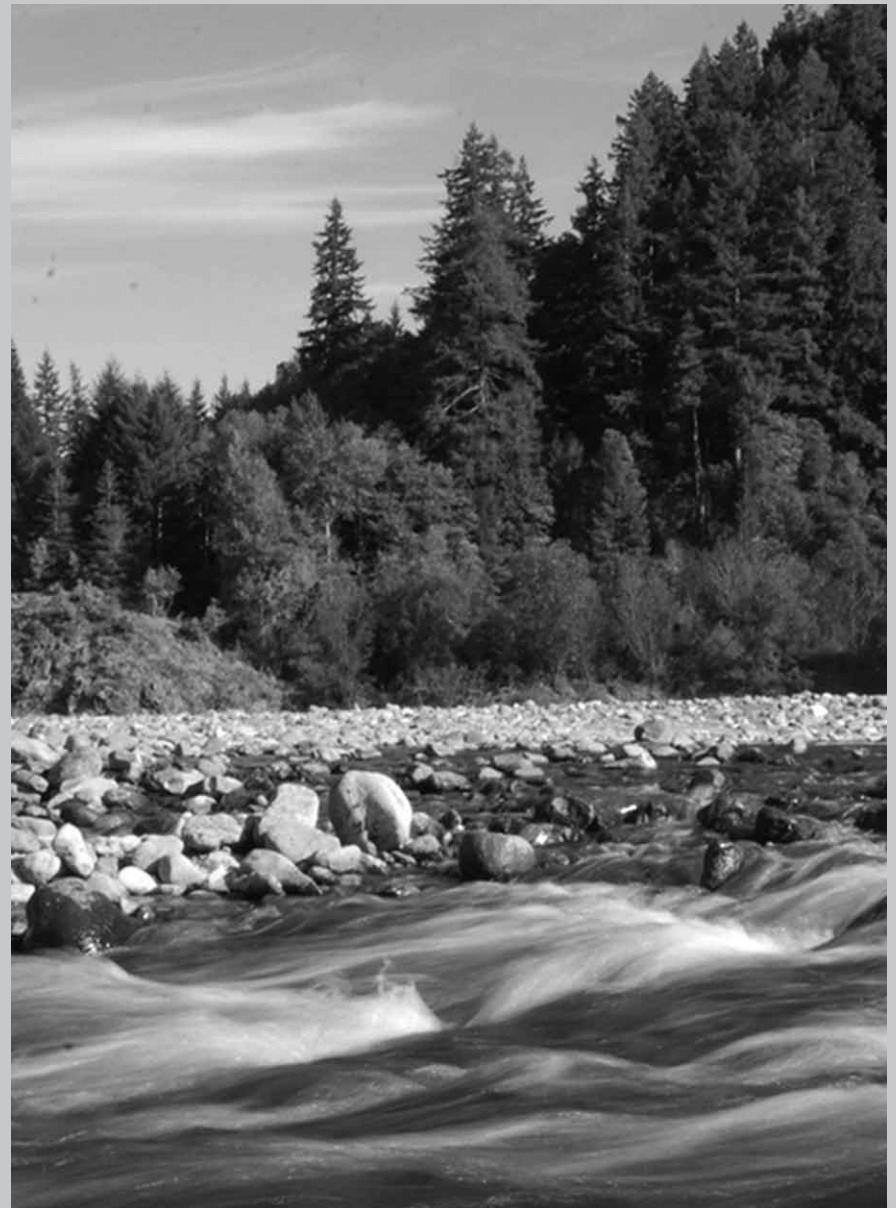
The land, consisting of 6,479 acres in total, were purchased from Green Diamond Resource Company. The Coastal Conservancy and the California Wildlife Conservation Board awarded grants, sought out by the Tribe and Western Rivers Conservancy, to finance the important acquisition.

“We are very grateful that the Coastal Conservancy, California Wildlife Conservation Board and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife recognized the tremendous value these properties embody in terms of fisheries protection and watershed restoration,” said Thomas P. O’Rourke, Chairman of the Yurok Tribe. “I believe our reputation as a leader in fisheries restoration made it easy for the government agencies to support this project. We are working hard to bring biodiversity and balance back to our ancestral territory.”

In the past five years, the Tribe has regained control over a significant portion of Yurok Ancestral Territory, all the while minimizing the financial impact to the Tribe. This recent acquisition is in addition to approximately 8,500 acres that were regained in the Blue Creek and Bear Creek watersheds at the end of 2013 and 22,495 acres the Tribe purchased in 2011. Before 2010, Yurok people had very little land, a result of several historical wrongs, including: genocide, colonization, poor government policies and theft. Not having a land base hindered the natural resource-based Tribe from continuing cultural traditions, like subsistence hunting, as well as gathering plants for food, medicine and baskets. The lack of land made it nearly impossible to establish a sustainable economy on the Yurok Reservation. It was also very difficult to develop basic infrastructure, like a cemetery, a park or a community center/recreational facility.

While the Reservation still lacks some basic necessities, such as a modern water and power system, the Tribe, over the past five years, has begun building these essential elements of a healthy community.

As for Blue Creek, the Tribe plans to transition it into a salmon sanctuary by restoring the forests and removing the sediment spilling roads that run through it. The exorbitant amount of silt that is deposited in the creek when a road fails



**Blue Creek is one of the most pristine tributaries in the Klamath Basin.**

has catastrophic consequences for fish and wildlife.

Blue Creek is one of the most important Klamath tributaries. Year-round, the deep blue stream sends cold water to the artificially warm Klamath. In certain years, thousands of Chinook salmon can be counted at the creek’s mouth, where the fish find respite from the dam-warmed, main-stem river. The scenic waterway, which is the size of a small river, is also a spawning destination for chinook and coho salmon as well as steelhead trout.

In addition to prime fish habitat, the nearly 30,000 acres in Blue Creek drainage that the Tribe is now the steward of has



tremendous biological diversity. The struggling Pacific Fisher, Humboldt marten and many more mammals that live there will no longer have to struggle to coexist with clear-cut logging operations and they will have an expansive space to reproduce and re-populate the land.

More than 1,300 vascular plant species are rooted in the Blue Creek watershed, as are uncommon trees such as the Brewer's Spruce and Sadler. The headwaters are protected by the California Wilderness Act and their inclusion in the Siskiyou Wilderness.

In addition to being protected, the 36,000 acres the Tribe is now the steward of will enjoy a designation that is better than simple protection. The restoration plan, once complete, will turn a significant portion of this swath of forest back into an old-growth system, where all manner of native creature, plant and fungi will flourish for the rest of time. ✨

## SAVE THE DATE

**KLAMATH SALMON FESTIVAL**  
**SATURDAY AUGUST 22, 2015**

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING**  
**SUNDAY, AUGUST 23, 2015**



Beverly Irene Walsh-Nix  
**February 2, 1934 - March 25, 2015**

Beverly Irene Walsh-Nix was born to Irene Pallon and Mavern Nix on February 2, 1934 in Weitchpec CA. She left her family to travel home March 25, 2015 in Santa Rosa CA. Beverly was preceded in death by her mother Irene Pallon, Papa Banjo, her sister Betty Erickson, her brother, her best friend Gale Pratt, her boys Thomas P. O'Rourke Jr., Carlos Lopez, and her favorite son in law Stanley Masten. Beverly is survived by her children Vicky Pallon, Nels Nelson Jr., Nelda Masten, Tawnie Scott, Rick Nelson, Danny, Bradie, Jimmy, her grandchildren William Nelson, Kaewett Nelson, Nels Nelson III, Tuk Tuk Nelson, Nehwan Nelson, Winterhawk Nelson, Mark Nelson, Windsong Nelson, Sian Gulley, Amber Masten, Shaylynn Masten, Shanley Masten, Stevie Masten, Tisha White, Greg White, Winkle White, Nina McCovey, Leah McCovey, Angelique Blake, James Nelson, Shashone Nelson, David Nelson, AmberRose Nelson, Juanita Nelson, Cammi Skillings, and also her many numerous nieces and nephews, and her great and great great grandchildren. Beverly loved to visit with friends and family, playing Nintendo, doing her crossword puzzles, crocheting, beading, watching jewelry shows, doing scratchers, going to the casino, playing pool tabs, she loved her dog Patty Cakes, and even riding quad at her age with her grandson Winterhawk Nelson. Beverly was a Florist for many years and she loved living in Alaska with her husband Thom Walsh. Honorary Pall Bearers, include Nels Nelson Jr., Dagoberto Lopez Sr., Rick Nelson, Billy Wilson, Tommy Willson, Patrick Wilson. Pall Bearers Nels Nelson III, Kaewett Nelson, Winterhawk Nelson, Lloyd Owen Jr., William Nelson, Brian Gulley, Jesus Chávez Sr., Dagoberto Lopez Jr., Rolando Cortez, Dylan Jensen, Oscar Lopez, César Hillman, Stevie Masten, Rogelio Lopez, Greg White, Winkle White, Tuk Tuk Nelson, Mark Nelson. Beverly's viewing was held at the First Baptist Church on Wednesday March 25, 2015 Our apologies if we have left anyone out.

THE YUOK TRIBAL COURT CORDIALLY INVITES  
YOU TO ATTEND THE

## GRAND OPENING

OF THE

# YUOK JUSTICE CENTER

TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2015  
10:00 AM

YUOK JUSTICE CENTER  
230 KLAMATH BOULEVARD  
KLAMATH, CALIFORNIA  
(IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF THE YUOK TRIBE  
KLAMATH MAIN OFFICE)

LIGHT REFRESHMENTS WILL FOLLOW IN THE  
KLAMATH OFFICE COMMUNITY ROOM



### UNITED INDIAN HEALTH SERVICES, INC.

1600 Weeot Way, Arcata, CA 95521 (707) 825-5000 Fax (707) 825-6747

#### ~ Health Promotion Technician ~

Elk Valley, F/T - Grant funded position. Seeking applicants to assist Tribal and American Indian Communities with health promotion and disease prevention activities. Must have a high school diploma or equivalent and one year related experience and/or training.

\*\*\*\*\* Salary \$21,840/yr to \$36,275/yr\*\*\*\*\*

#### Summary of Benefits

##### Health Insurance – Available after 6 months from eligibility date.

- UIHS currently pays all of employee cost at 100% FTE. If less than 100%, the employee is responsible for the remaining percentage.
- Currently UIHS pays 60% of additional dependant premium.

##### United Indian Health Services Direct Health Care Services (Board Approved)

- Board approved services available for use after 60 calendar days.
- Dependents eligible for Board approved services after 6 months.

##### AFLAC – Supplemental Plan

##### Holidays –

- 11 days of holidays. One is a floating holiday that is not available until initial trial period passed.

##### Personalized Leave –

- Available for use after **90 calendar days**. The cap to accrue is set at 240/hours.

	Hrs/Per Pay Period	Days/Per Year
0 – 1 year	4.92	15.99
1+year to 5 years	6.46	21.00
5 – more years	8.00	26.00

##### Jury/Witness Duty –

- Paid for up to 120 hours (within calendar year) of jury duty less fees paid by court.

##### Continuing Education/Training

- Paid annually – July through June for Full time
- Paid up to 10 days of leave to take CE/Training

To apply go to [www.uihs.org](http://www.uihs.org) download the application under "Employment Opportunities" & email 1) Resume 2) Cover Letter & 3) Employment Application 4) American Indian Tribal Verification (copy) if applicable to [UIHS-Recruiting@crihb.org](mailto:UIHS-Recruiting@crihb.org)



For a list of current job opening visit the Human Resource page at  
[www.yuroktribe.org](http://www.yuroktribe.org) or call (707) 482-1350 ext. 1376



# New Redwood Hotel Casino Job Openings



## Full-Time Positions

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Security Officer (part time), Cage  
Manager, Player's Club Supervisor,  
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Specialist or Revenue Auditor, EVS  
Supervisor, Abalone Bar & Grill Host/  
Hostess**

To view complete job descriptions  
visit [redwoodhotelcasino.com](http://redwoodhotelcasino.com).

Interested applicants can  
apply on-line at [jobs@redwoodhotelcasino.com](mailto:jobs@redwoodhotelcasino.com) or drop off  
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Steward.

**If you have questions,  
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Casino Human Resource Manager  
Sandra Lowry at (707) 482-1777.**

### NOTICE - UNSUB YUROK TRIBAL COURT

The Yurok Tribe Public Safety Officers seized the following nets at the locations listed below.

COURT CASE: YT-CV-2015-43  
PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLAINT # 15-000005  
SEIZURE LOCATION: 300 feet below Bear Creek (30')  
APPROXIMATE DATE: 1/09/2015

COURT CASE: YT-CV-2015-50  
PUBLIC SAFETY COMPLAINT #15-000037  
SEIZURE LOCATION: Surpur Creek (20')  
APPROXIMATE DATE: 3/10/2015

These nets were seized in accordance with Yurok Tribe Fishing Rights Ordinance Section 7(b). The nets will be forfeited if no claim or appearance is made. You may be held liable or charged for a violation of YTFO Section 7(b) upon claiming ownership of the nets.

To claim ownership, immediately notify: The Yurok Tribal Court: P.O. Box 1027, Klamath, CA 95548. Phone: (707) 482-1350.

Hearing for the above Cases will be held:

DATE: Thursday, May 14, 2015; 10AM  
PLACE: Yurok Justice Center  
230 Klamath Boulevard, Klamath, CA

**AFTER THE HEARING  
DATE NETS MAY BE  
FORFEITED AND SOLD!**

# NEW YUROK TRIBE JOB OPENINGS

Deputy Executive Director  
**\$70,873 –\$92,134/\$84,278-\$109,560**

Natural Resources Division Director  
**\$70,873-\$92,134 / \$84,278-\$109,560**

**ALL HIRING IS SUBJECT TO THE YUROK TRIBE'S HIRING PREFERENCE**



# Yurok Tribe

Office: (707) 482-1350  
mmais@yuroktribe.nsn.us  
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**New hazel shoots rise from last year's cultural burn. This year, the Cultural Fire Management Council and its partners burned a total of 176 acres on the upper Reservation, including large stands of hazel.**