



The Klamath Tribes Tribal Council

NEWS RELEASE

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Klamath Irrigation District Engages in Second Illegal Water Diversion in Less than Six Months, Pushing the Homeland of the Klamath Tribes Closer to Ecological Collapse

For the second time in less than six months, the Klamath Irrigation District (KID) has defied federal orders and illegally diverted water from Ews (Upper Klamath Lake). The Klamath Reclamation Project's federally approved water allocation was exhausted on August 15, and KID was ordered by the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) to cease diverting water on August 18. However, KID continued to take water from Ews until 6:00 p.m. on August 23rd. That same evening, their leadership sent a letter to BOR threatening to reopen the head gates of their canal "within the next 48 hours" unless they received "further guidance" from BOR.

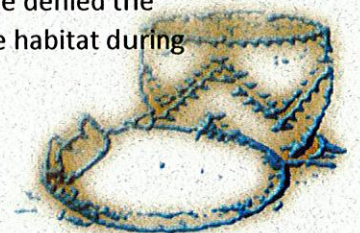
The Klamath Tribes urge KID leadership to act responsibly. Tensions are already high in our community, and we have tribal members coming home in large numbers for our Restoration Celebration this weekend. Further treaty violations will put all of our communities at risk.

The Klamath Tribes' membership continues to show remarkable restraint. And Tribal Council urges all sides to please remain peaceful. Obey the law. Respect the authority of the federal government. We want everyone in the Basin to be safe.

Everyone should understand that minimum lake levels required by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Biological Opinion in support of the Endangered Species Act—ostensibly intended to protect our c'waam (Lost River Suckers) and Koptu ((Short Nosed Suckers) from imminent extinction--remain unmet year after year after year.

Specifically, and tragically, the minimum levels necessary for successful spawning were blatantly disregarded for the last three years. And when our fish did manage to hatch they were denied the required USFWS Biological Opinion minimum levels necessary for access to protective habitat during two of the last three summers.

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Far worse, these monthly and yearly treaty violations are the tip of the proverbial iceberg. They are a consequence of 120 years of wholesale destruction wrought upon our homeland ecosystem by the Klamath Reclamation Project, the corporate cattle industry, and profit-obsessed timber companies.

While it gives us no pleasure to point bluntly to these acts of cultural violence, they are the cold, hard truth. They need to be said out loud and acknowledged. Progress in the Basin requires it.

All concerned people need to understand that Ews is not an irrigation trough. Ews is part of a miraculously complex eco-systemic web of life that evolved symbiotically over millennia. The Klamath, Modoc, and Yahooskin Paiute peoples evolved with it. We understand it. We know how to repair it. And we know that too many of our non-tribal neighbors, despite their often-admirable intentions, are racing all of us toward an ecological Armageddon.