

Klamath Tribes Member and College Student Rachel Mitchell to Spend Her Summer Working at Reclamation's Klamath Basin Area Office

By Kevin Moore, Public Affairs Specialist, KBAO

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. It's summertime, and for college students around the country, summer represents an opportunity to chill a little and recover from the last semester. Some hang out around the water, some visit parents and let mom do their laundry, some sit around and play their favorite video games...and some, like Rachel Mitchell, hustle and secure a job for the summer to help with college expenses.



Rachel Mitchell, a Klamath Tribal member and summer intern, works on a water measurement device in the Klamath Basin Area Office water quality lab.

Rachel, the daughter of Jeff and Kathleen Mitchell of Chiloquin, Ore., and a member of the Klamath Tribes, won't be flipping burgers or waiting tables: she's landed a position with the Bureau of Reclamation at the Klamath Basin Area Office (KBAO) in Klamath Falls, Ore. During summer 2012, she'll be helping a group of dedicated professionals who work to, as Reclamation's mission statement states, "manage, develop and protect water in an environmentally and economically sound manner in the best interest of the American public."

Chuck Korson, KBAO's Native American Affairs Coordinator, will serve as Rachel's mentor. He is excited about what the summer will hold: "Last year, we had a Klamath tribal student who worked in KBAO, and we're looking forward to having one again this year."

"Rachel will be here for approximately 10 weeks, and she will work in a rotational capacity with the Fisheries Resources Branch, Water Operations Branch and possibly the Admin Office, if time allows," Korson said. "I will be providing guidance and support to Rachel to address challenges she may experience while working in the field with our water quality and fisheries crews," he added.

A student at Central Oregon Community College, Rachel was selected for her position after applying to the College Intern Program (CIP) run by the Klamath Tribes. Reclamation provided funding to the Klamath Tribes to hire and place Rachel at KBAO. The CIP is just one of many programs designed to provide employment opportunities for tribal youth.

The Department of the Interior recently launched the Klamath Basin Tribal Youth employment and education initiative, which involves several federal agencies working together to help Native

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American youth complete high school and gain summer employment as well as help those youth who decide to go to college.

In the past, Rachel has worked on wildlife habitat-monitoring projects and mule-trapping/tagging studies. She enjoys the outdoors and giving back to nature. For her, this is another opportunity to learn more about the environment, and she is looking forward to experiencing firsthand the work Reclamation does to enhance the habitat of Endangered Species Act-listed suckers.

“I’m excited about this summer and the opportunity to work with water quality and fisheries,” Rachel said. “I’ll get to learn a lot about the issues that affect the fish that are so important to my tribe, and I may find ways we can help them recover.”

This position will also give Rachel more experience as she progresses in her college studies. “Right now I’m studying forestry, and I have a strong love for natural resources. I’m not sure what my final major will be, but it will have something to do with the outdoors. After I graduate, I hope to come back home and work for the tribe; and if not the tribe, at least somewhere in the Klamath area. I’d really like to make a difference,” she added.

Hopefully, when Rachel returns to school, she’ll have a pocket full of cash and fond memories of time spent benefiting her people, community and nation. Who knows? She may even have a goal of coming back to KBAO where her work will make a difference enhancing and protecting the water resource that is so vital to the beautiful country she calls home.

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