

Klamath Tribe Harvest Salmon at the Iron Gate Hatchery

HORN BROOK, CALIF. – For the first time in over a century fresh Klamath River salmon will grace the tables of Klamath Tribe members in the fall. On October 11, members of the Klamath Tribe were invited to the fish hatchery at the foot of Iron Gate Dam and performed a ceremony of thanksgiving and distribution of the fish. Approximately 20 Tribal members were on hand for the celebration and to take home some highly prized filets offered up by the tribal staff.

The occasion was the result of hard work by the Department of the Interior, California Department of Fish and Game, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Klamath Tribes. Utilizing the trust and relationships forged during negotiation of the

Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement and Klamath Hydro-Settlement Agreement, the agencies and Tribe worked out the arrangements to make the historic event possible. “It’s a small step in the right direction and demonstrates the benefits of collaboration among our KBRA partners,” explained Klamath Tribes’ Vice-Chairman Don Gentry. “Hopefully it’s a sign of good things to come for all of us who are dependent on Klamath Basin resources.”



Tribal, hatchery and federal representatives come to assist in the first fresh salmon gathering for the Klamath Tribes in over a century. (Photo provided by Klamath Tribe)

Legislation to authorize the two agreements was introduced in Congress 11 months ago. The KBRA will help pave the way for continued restoration efforts in the Klamath watershed and provide benefits for commercial fisheries, agricultural interests and Tribes. The Secretary of the Interior signed the KHSA because these negotiated agreements are seen by many as the best way to end the continuous dispute over water that has plagued the watershed since 2001. Jason Phillips, Area Manager for Reclamation’s Klamath Project, was on hand to participate in the celebration. “Although the KBRA is not yet authorized, this salmon harvest is one example of how they would benefit our Tribal neighbors. The KBRA provision for an interim fishery would provide the Klamath Tribes the opportunity to participate in the Chinook salmon harvest at Iron Gate when numbers are sufficient. A record run of salmon and agreement among the stakeholders made the decision to proceed with the Tribal distribution of the fish an easy one.”

While the agreements have yet to be authorized, one thing is for certain: the willingness to work together has much improved and will continue to provide benefits to many stakeholders in the months and years ahead. Those on hand for the ceremony were very appreciative of those efforts. Perhaps Perry Chocktoot, Klamath Tribes’ Culture and Heritage Department Director, captured the sentiment of those on hand best. “A big thank you to the Creator for providing the Tribes with the salmon this year and to all those who made it happen. We look forward to the day when we’ll once again have the opportunity to harvest in the Upper Klamath Basin.”