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HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE REJECTS KLAMATH RIVER DEAL BECAUSE IT LACKS ASSURED WATER FOR FISH

Hoopa, Calif. – The Hoopa Valley Tribe of northern California will not endorse the latest draft of the Klamath River Basin Restoration Agreement (KRBRA) because the agreement lacks adequate water assurances for fish. Despite being in the minority among the negotiators, Tribal Chairman Clifford Lyle Marshall said Hoopa would never waive its fishery-based water rights, as demanded by federal and other negotiators, in a deal providing no assurances for fisheries restoration.

“What began as dam removal negotiations got turned into a water deal. PacifiCorp left the room two years ago and negotiations with the company have since been separate from this negotiation. The terms of this so-called restoration agreement make the right to divert water for irrigation the top priority, trumping salmon water needs and the best available science on the river,” Marshall said. “Such an upside down deal threatens the goal of restoration and the Hoopa Tribe’s fishing rights,” Hoopa Councilman Joe LeMieux said. “We cannot waive the rights of generations to come. Dangling a carrot like this will not work for Hoopa.”

The Hoopa objections come after three years of negotiations with farm irrigators, environmental and fishing groups, government agencies, counties, and other tribes. The Tribe has been a leading advocate to protect water rights and fish habitat in the Klamath and Trinity rivers that run through their reservation. “We have worked for years with all the parties to forge an agreement that genuinely restores Klamath River salmon habitat. Unfortunately, this deal locks away too much water for irrigators with no recourse for salmon when the fish need more water. Salmon need enough water, plain and simple,” he said.

Marshall said the proposed billion dollar deal altogether ignores the National Academy of Science’s recommendations in its November 2007 report on the U.S. - contracted Hardy Phase II Instream Flow Assessment in the Klamath River. Congressional members have urged the use of the Hardy Report to protect coho salmon from jeopardy. Marshall said the deal also dismisses the only independent scientific reviews of the agreement itself. “This latest draft is not a modern science-based river restoration plan. It looks more like an old West irrigation deal, guarantees for irrigators, empty promises for the Indians.”

The Tribal Chairman also said that agreement proponents talk about helping the river’s fish, but no real fisheries restoration objectives, standards, or assurances are in the agreement. “Some parties seem to think there’s no other way to remove the dams. The declining fish population tells us the river is being compromised to death. Hoopa will retain its rights to defend the Klamath. We will work with any and all parties to remove the dams and assure a restored healthy river.” ###