

Public Statement

Hoopa Valley Tribe

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Hoopa Tribe Strikes at Interior's Coveted Westlands Water District Corporate Deal

The Hoopa Valley Tribe applauds Fresno County's Superior Court refusal to validate a proposed contract between Westlands Water District (Westlands) and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). The contract would have allocated up to 1,150,000 acre-feet of Northern California water annually to Westlands, most of which would be imported from the Trinity River, which has sustained the Hupa people since time immemorial.

"Reclamation should not approve this contract until appropriate provisions are included to protect water and fisheries that are lawfully reserved to the Hoopa Valley Tribe and citizens of the Trinity River watershed," said Hoopa Tribal Vice Chairman, Oscar Billings.

The Tribe has proposed contract language to protect the Trinity water and called upon Reclamation and its Central Valley Project (CVP) contractors to meet their obligations under existing federal law to provide for Trinity River fishery restoration funding as part of their contract requirements. "Our federal trustee has long known what steps are needed to protect our river and our people," said Hoopa Fisheries Department Director, Mike Orcutt. "Instead, the federal government chronically mismanages our fishery and water resources and shifts the blame for the declining fishery onto the Hupa people," said Hoopa Valley Tribal Council Member, Vivienne Orcutt.

Since 1964, Reclamation has been sending Trinity River water 400 miles south to Westlands' industrial farms in the San Joaquin Valley. Westlands, the largest irrigation district in the world, has made billions of dollars from use of federally subsidized water from the Central Valley Project. At the same time the diversions have caused a 90% decline in Trinity River fish populations.

"Although the Hupa people, Congress, Federal Courts and several administrations have acted to repair that damage, Westlands has been our relentless foe," said Vice Chairman Billings. "Now, Westlands has persuaded Reclamation to fast-track a deal that could devastate our rights, our people and our fishery", said Vice Chairman Billings. "The Westlands contract is immoral, unlawful. It cannot be allowed to stand."