

News Release



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U.S. Department of the Interior, NASA, and Forest Service Inaugurate Innovative Tribal Student Education Program in the Klamath Basin

YREKA — College students representing Klamath River area tribes in Southern Oregon and Northern California today have concluded a first-of-its-kind 10-week natural resources education program that connects federal scientists and tribal college students to river restoration projects in the Klamath Basin.

Throughout the course of the program, six students representing the Yurok Tribe, Hoopa Valley Tribe, Karuk Tribe, Quartz Valley Tribe and the Klamath Tribes, worked on habitat restoration projects, developed models and collected data in the Sycan River and Shasta Big Springs Creek—two important tributaries in the Klamath watershed that support tribal fisheries.

According to Ren Lohofener, Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the benefits of the Klamath Leadership Development Program for Integrative Science and Traditional Knowledge extend beyond collection of valuable scientific data. “This program has the unique opportunity to inspire tribal college students to pursue excellence in disciplines that drive science and innovative technology in support of natural resource conservation.”

Lohofener added, “With this program, we are able to bring together numerous federal agencies and departments and a number of federally recognized tribes to share a goal of building a deep and enduring connection between science, technology, and the great outdoors.”

The students combined NASA’s remote sensing technology with ground-based monitoring and traditional cultural knowledge of the Klamath Basin tribes. This approach—traditional ecological knowledge—is the practice of integrating the knowledge of native tribes with modern scientific methods to yield new understandings of the landscape.

“By integrating both science and traditional ecological knowledge we can better understand resource management, and, at the same time, help sustain and enrich the vibrant cultures of the Klamath Basin tribes,” said Lohofener. “We hope this program will help prepare, inspire, excite, encourage and nurture students in the crucial disciplines of science, technology, and natural resource management.”

(More)

Mentors from the tribes and agencies such as NASA, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service assisted the students with designing a scientific protocol to assess the physical, biological, and ecological health of these key Klamath River tributaries that are important salmon spawning and rearing habitat. Humboldt State University, Southern Oregon University and Oregon Institute of Technology, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and others also supported the program.

The students then developed methods to assess how these study sites within certain tributary reaches contribute to a functional landscape that supports tribal culture. The student team also had opportunities to apply their own tribe's traditional land management practices to inform habitat restoration activities on both public and private lands.

"This is a tremendous opportunity to promote and deliver inspired science, technology, and natural resource education in Klamath Basin that is hands-on and conducted in real world settings," said Randy Moore, Regional Forester for the U.S. Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region. "This program recognizes the Tribes' traditional knowledge and provides the tribal students the opportunity to contribute in a real way to improving the natural habitat of wildlife in their traditional lands."

"The goodwill generated by students working side-by-side with leading scientists and researchers will serve as a bridge between the tribes and federal agencies, opening doors for future collaboration in scientific research," said Trevor Super, Klamath Basin Tribal Youth Program Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "Giving students the resources to tackle this complicated task has created a great opportunity to utilize their educated and culturally aware perspective in the Klamath Basin." Super also noted that the Leadership Development program sets up the students to have a major impact in their tribal communities, strengthens tribal and federal partnerships, and creates a path for other tribal students to follow in their footsteps.

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