



YUROK TRIBE
190 Klamath Boulevard
Klamath, CA 95548



ROUND VALLEY INDIAN TRIBES
77826 Covelo Road
Covelo, CA 95428

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts:

Yurok Tribe - Matt Mais
(707) 954-0976
mmais@yuroktribe.nsn.us

Round Valley Indian Tribes – Wyatt Smith
(630) 531-1066
wsmith@rvit.org

Yurok Tribe, Round Valley Indian Tribes Sign Landmark Treaty

Agreement Supports Restoration of Eel River's Imperiled Salmon and Steelhead Runs

In an historic milestone, two sovereign Indian tribes have joined together to reverse decades of fisheries decline on the Eel River, the second longest river in California. On October 28, 2025, the Round Valley Indian Tribes and the Yurok Tribe met at the Wildlands Conservancy's Eel River Canyon Preserve and signed a Treaty of Friendship that pledges their joint efforts to restore the Eel River.

“The Eel River is our lifeblood and when it suffers, our people suffer,” said Round Valley Indian Tribes President Joe Parker after signing the agreement within the ancestral territory of the Tribes on the Eel River. “We are pleased to join with the Yurok Tribe, which is the leader in restoring the Klamath River through dam removal, revegetation, and habitat restoration,” he added. “With this partnership, we hope all Native tribes around the world will be motivated to stand up and fight for their culture and rights,” he noted.

“We are honored to contribute the extensive knowledge and experience we have gained through Klamath River dam removal with our relatives from the Round Valley Indian Tribes,” added Joseph L. James, the Chairman of the Yurok Tribe. “Together, we are uplifting our communities and forging a new path that aligns with our shared cultural values.”

The Treaty of Friendship will facilitate sharing of knowledge and expertise between the two tribes, and it will foster collaboration on restoration projects on the Eel River. The Potter Valley Hydroelectric Project, whose dams block several hundred miles of critical fishery habitat, is being decommissioned by PG&E. These ecological impairments have contributed to the decline of

salmon, steelhead, and Pacific lamprey populations. The removal of these dams creates opportunities to restore the Eel River to the healthy, free-flowing river it once was. The experience of the Yurok Tribe in restoring salmon runs on the Klamath River will inform tribal efforts on the Eel River to achieve the same result. “Based on the Klamath River and hundreds of other dam removals across the United States, we expect the Eel River to heal quickly once the river runs free,” said Chairman James.

The Round Valley Indian Tribes have lived along the Eel River since time immemorial. Like the Yurok Tribe, the Round Valley Indian Tribes have suffered incalculable cultural, subsistence, economic, and community injuries from the collapse of the fishery. With dam removal and comprehensive restoration efforts planned for the watershed, the tribes and fisheries experts expect native fish runs to gradually recover. The Treaty of Friendship brings the Yurok Tribe into this process as a partner with the Round Valley Indian Tribes. For both Tribes, the Treaty is a tangible expression of their traditional and cultural ties to rivers that have sustained them from the beginning of their existence.

Factual Background

Eel River Dam Removal

Round Valley Indian Tribes is a confederation of tribes including Yuki, Wailacki, Concow, Little Lake Pomo, Nomlacki, and Pit River.

In 2020, a diverse coalition, comprised of the Round Valley Indian Tribes, state and county agencies, and agricultural water suppliers, collaborated with Congressman Jared Huffman to develop the Two Basin Solution Partnership. This initiative provided the framework for decommissioning the dams, managing water diversions, and advancing the restoration of the Eel River.

In July 2025, RVIT, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, Humboldt County, Mendocino County Inland Water and Power Commission, Sonoma County Water Authority, California Trout, and Trout Unlimited, signed a Water Diversion Agreement establishing an ecologically balanced flow diversion schedule from the Eel River to the Russian River. The Round Valley Indian Tribes developed this new flow diversion schedule to occur during high-flow months in the winter and spring, with unimpaired flows maintained in the Eel River in late-spring, summer, and fall. The Eel Russian Project Authority will construct a new diversion facility by which this water will be diverted into the East Branch of the Russian River.

Klamath and Eel River Dam Removals

The Yurok Tribe played a leading role in the decades long campaign to remove four dams on the Klamath River. Shortly after the decommissioning project was completed last year, thousands of salmon, steelhead and Pacific lamprey travelled above the former site of Iron Gate dam. This fall, numerous salmon migrated more than 250 miles to the Williamson River and Sprague River in Oregon for the first time in more than 100 years, exceeding the most optimistic expectations for the river’s recovery.

Employing more than 100 biologists, ecologists, engineers and other subject-matter experts, the Yurok Tribe is one of the largest natural resources management organizations in California. The Yurok Tribe has more than three decades of experience in planning, designing, implementing and monitoring large-scale river restoration initiatives across California. Every year, the Yurok Tribe restores dozens of miles of river and hundreds of acres to riparian habitat on the Klamath River, Sacramento River, and various smaller streams in between.

Much like the Klamath River, restoring the Eel River watershed is a monumental undertaking that requires coordination among many organizations. The Round Valley Indian Tribes are also collaborating with the Wiyot Tribe, California Trout, Trout Unlimited, and other partners on an Eel River Restoration and Conservation Plan to improve ecosystem health over the long term within the Eel River watershed.