

Craig Bradford

February 10, 2015

California Fish & Game Commission
Sonke Mastrup, Executive Director
1416 Ninth Street, Room 1320
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Commissioners:

The Yurok Tribe's proposal to ban sport fishing surrounding the mouth of Blue Creek's junction with the Klamath River is burdened by two important features that argue strongly against your action to support it. The first is the prescriptive rights of non-Native American fishermen to enjoy the steelhead and salmon fishing at that location. The second represents yet another hostile, racist jab at those of us who stem from other cultures and contribute so much to the vitality of the river by way of charitable contributions to 5 hatcheries, paying taxes, and buying fishing licenses/capture cards. If you make the wrong decision in this case, I personally would join with a number of complainants to file a class action lawsuit against the Commission that most likely would result in an injunction to keep that section of river open to all sport fishermen.

I have fished on the Klamath River since 1958 and personally witnessed over the years the significant trauma it suffered when the bottom was dredged to float log rafts. For nearly 6 decades, I watched as belligerent Native American individuals abused anadromous and catadromous fish populations via illegal netting practices and snagging. I periodically observed them shooting deer and bears to keep them from fouling their nets. I have been fired upon when fishing from boats and on the shoreline. I have seen the damage caused by Native Americans dumping illegal chemicals into the adjoining creeks after they abandoned meth laboratories. Even as recently as last year, vehicles parked at the County ramp in Klamath Glen were periodically ravaged by Native Americans. One might predict the same for this coming summer. Local law enforcement officials are typically reluctant to arrest these individuals, as are California DFW personnel to cite them when fishing regulations are blatantly violated. The disgusting attitude of "political correctness" so frequently demonstrated by federal, state, and local public servants along the Klamath River basin is not welcome by those of us who so carefully strive to observe the law. I could go on and on with such diatribe, but I imagine you get the point. For whatever pretexts various tribal councils inevitably find ways to muster, daily abuses by Native Americans against the common rights of other U.S. citizens are shamelessly tolerated by a range of public servants, and many of us have grown extremely tired of it. The steadily declining economies of Klamath Glen and Klamath Township make the case that regulatory and/or law enforcement inadequacies are no longer tolerable. Indeed, Title 14 appears to pander to cultural exclusion more than it fosters inclusion and Constitutional fairness.

I earned a baccalaureate degree in biology and conducted subsequent graduate studies on parasitized trout subspecies. I am schooled in the sciences associated with anadromous fisheries.

At 71 years of age, fly-fishing is my foremost joy. Every summer, friends of mine position a house trailer at *Blackberry Patch RV Park* in Klamath Glen and live off of the local Klamath economy when staying overnight to enjoy the extraordinary summer steelhead fishing where Blue Creek merges with the Klamath River. Others of us commute daily from Del Norte County townships.

Of the productive steelhead fishing spots still remaining along the lower Klamath River, Blue Creek Riffle remains at the top as a truly impressive fishery. I eagerly join with other dedicated fly fishermen at that special location every summer between June and late September. We fish a ¼ mile stretch of river for summer steelhead using flies, long fly rods, and fly lines with light tippets (mostly 10-pound fluorocarbon). We stand on dry ground just below the Blue Creek outlet from the east bank, and fish only for steelhead. If a salmon grabs one of our flies, we normally break the tippet for a quick disconnection. None of us is interested in a 45-minute, boring struggle with a wasting Chinook Salmon that runs only downriver when agitated by a hook in its mouth.

Professional guides representing fly shops in the region and hosting clients congregate near the mouth of Blue Creek several times per week. We all know each other as friends and apply the traditional courtesies associated with sport and fly-fishing. Just about all of us who normally use flies pursue summer steelhead on a catch-and-release basis. Guides who side-drift from boats spend only three or four morning hours fishing mostly for steelhead, but they are blown off the river around 11:00 a.m. each day by strong, up-river winds. Despite what you might hear from tribal sources, almost no guided clients or bank fishermen target salmon at Blue Creek. This is a steelhead fishery. If you choose to prohibit all sport fishing there ostensibly to protect salmon, you will have unfairly/unforgivably impacted steelhead fishermen. Such seems to have been the goal of the Yurok Tribe for many years.

Yes, of course we are sensitive to the stressed condition of the steelhead that crowd the Blue Creek gravel bar, for the temperature of the main river sometimes exceeds 72 degrees during the middle of the summer season. Our unusual success fishing from the bank there derives from the cold water leaching from the Blue Creek gravel bar. It is technically groundwater, for the flow exists well below the land surface. The cold water provides relief for the steelhead temporarily holding in close proximity to the bank as they build strength for the journey upstream. We do not illegally snag these fish, as is done at the "spit" downriver. We in fact play them quickly with small, barbless hooks to assure their survival upon release. All of our caught fish are returned to the river. One of the pluses of fishing from the Blue Creek gravel bar is that we do not have to wade into the heavy current up to our waists, as is the case anywhere else on the Klamath River. Throughout the Klamath River system, the bottom is quite slick and dangerous below the water line. Fly-fishing from the bank along the long gravel bar therefore equates to safety for those of us who are partially disabled.

Last, I hope all of you who sit on the Commission and are conflicted by previous tribal employment or Native American ancestry will recuse yourselves from the docketed process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a stylized name or initials, located at the bottom left of the page.