

# **Yurok Tribe Acquires 22,000 Acres of Ancestral Territory to Protect Water Quality and Habitat on the Lower Klamath River**

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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*Klamath, CA* -- A large land acquisition project was completed today on California's Redwood Coast to conserve habitat, restore water quality and reestablish indigenous territory along the lower Klamath River.

The Yurok Tribe, working with the nonprofit Western Rivers Conservancy, completed purchase of 22,237 acres from Green Diamond Resource Company in Humboldt County. The land, part of the Yurok's ancestral territory, will be sustainably managed for clean water and forest health.

"The Tribe has long sought the return of ancestral land to create a salmon sanctuary and restore tribal cultural management practices, which benefit fish, wildlife and the ecosystem as a whole," Yurok Tribal Chairman Thomas O'Rourke said.

"This is an historic accomplishment to ensure clean, cold water for the Klamath River's salmon runs while re-establishing a portion of the Yurok's homeland," said Phillip Wallin, President of Western Rivers Conservancy.

"This is the culmination of almost 23 years of collaboration with the Yurok Tribe, commencing with the establishment of the Hoopa/Yurok Settlement Act of 1988. Our company is proud of our role in partnering with the Yurok and Western Rivers Conservancy to see this landscape moved into the Tribe's stewardship," said Neal Ewald, Vice President and General Manager of Green Diamond Resource Company.

The land purchased today, more than 34 square miles, will become a Yurok Tribal Community Forest, more than doubling the Tribe's land base. The Yurok's sustainable forestry management approach will protect salmon, improve water

quality and restore meadows that traditionally supported subsistence hunting and gathering. The Tribe will work to further enhance three tributaries to the lower Klamath River that flow through the property: Pecwan, Ke'pel and Weitchpec Creeks. These creeks provide vital cold water and spawning grounds for the many anadromous Klamath fish species.

In December, the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) voted to authorize financing of \$18.75 million from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund for the Yurok Tribe to purchase the land.

"The State Water Resources Control Board supports this project as part of our program to continue to reduce nonpoint source pollution in California's waterways," said Esteban Almanza, head of SWRCB's Division of Financial Assistance. "This is an excellent project that provides multiple benefits to water quality and salmon habitat, and meets the high standards of management practices toward the success of our program objectives."

In addition, bridge financing was provided to Western Rivers Conservancy by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

By limiting road-building, increasing forest diversity, setting aside carbon reserves and implementing the Tribe's no-herbicide-use policy, among other management prescriptions, the project helps meet the State's water quality goal to limit pollutants (Total Maximum Daily Loads), such as sediment and chemicals, allowed in the Klamath River.

"This land acquisition project addresses both water quality protection and restoration, and ultimately helps meet the State's goals to mitigate adverse impacts to California's waterways," Almanza said.

The project will protect habitat for seven aquatic species, including: coho salmon, steelhead trout, Chinook salmon, coastal cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, southern torrent salamander, and tailed frog, as called for in Green Diamond's Aquatic Habitat Conservation Plan approved several years ago. The Tribe's approach to forestry will promote old-growth habitat and forest diversity that will benefit a number of imperiled species, including marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, fisher, Humboldt marten and mardon skipper.

In addition to being a major conservation achievement, this project is also a major cultural accomplishment. The Yurok Tribe has long sought to regain this ancestral territory to rejuvenate traditional cultural practices, including subsistence fishing, hunting, gathering and basket-weaving.

"The Yurok Tribe looks forward to managing these lands in the way they were meant to be, which is for all species," Chairman O'Rourke said.

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#### **About the Yurok Tribe**

The Yurok Tribe, the largest tribe in California, has 5,500 members. The Tribe's ancestral territory runs eighty-three miles along the California coastline from the Little River to Damnation Creek. To the east the Tribe's ancestral lands reach above the Klamath River's confluence with the Trinity River. For more information about the Yurok Tribe, please visit [www.yuroktribe.org](http://www.yuroktribe.org).

**About Western Rivers Conservancy**

Western Rivers Conservancy (WRC) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to protect outstanding river ecosystems in the western United States. WRC acquires land to conserve critical habitat, provide public access for compatible use and enjoyment, and cooperates with other agencies and organizations to secure the health of whole ecosystems. [www.westernrivers.org](http://www.westernrivers.org)

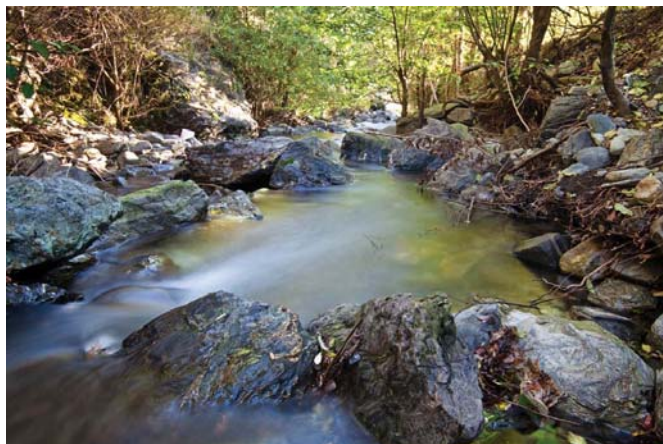
**About the California State Water Resources Control Board**

The State Water Resources Control Board's mission is to preserve, enhance and restore the quality of California's water resources, and ensure their proper allocation and efficient use for the benefit of present and future generations. <http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/>

**About Green Diamond Resource Company**

Green Diamond Resource Company is a family-owned company headquartered in Seattle, Washington. Founded in 1890, Green Diamond owns timberland in Northern California and Washington and produces lumber at its subsidiary, The California Redwood Company, in Northern California. Our lands are managed in an environmentally responsible manner, as sustainable and productive working forests. For more information about Green Diamond, please visit [www.greendiamond.com](http://www.greendiamond.com).

*For graphics, please contact Jenny DuVander, Western Rivers Conservancy, at [jduvander@westernrivers.org](mailto:jduvander@westernrivers.org) or 503-241-0151.*



# Yurok Tribe - Lower Klamath River Acquisition

Humboldt County, California

