

## NATIVE NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

# Group Reports Death Threats in Klamath Basin

KLAMATH FALLS, OR. (AP) — People on both sides of the irrigation water dispute in the Klamath Basin have received death threats this summer, according to a working group of farmers and officials set up to mediate the area's water troubles.

The threats were another sign that the conflict that began with a federal decision to reserve water in Upper Klamath Lake for protected fish, withholding it from more than 1,000 farms, has escalated.

"Many of us in leadership positions, regardless of which side we're on, have heard from people talking about taking this in unfortunate directions," said Klamath County Commissioner Steve West, a member of the Hatfield Upper Basin Working Group.

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a member of the Hatfield Upper Basin Working Group

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Many threats have been leveled against farmers and other landowners interested in selling their land to the government as part of a proposal to reduce demand for irrigation water, according to members of the

group.

Indians in Klamath Tribes, who have pushed for recovery of endangered fish, also have faced threats and intimidation, they said. So have environmentalists, elected officials and others.

Klamath County Sheriff Tim Evinger said no such threats have been reported to him, except for sec-

ondhand accounts of Native Americans being refused service at local restaurants and airmen from Kingsley Field hearing derogatory remarks about working for the federal government. He investigated those reports but could not substantiate them, he said.

The Hatfield Group, convened about five years ago by former Senator Mark Hatfield, to mediate the area's water disputes, unanimously passed a resolution condemning intimidation and threats.

The group's resolution came just as convoys from around the country converge on Klamath Falls with food and money for ailing farmers in what some fear could become a flash point in the basin.

## Treasury Finds No Wrongdoing in Destruction of Indian Documents

WASHINGTON, D.C. (AP) — A Treasury Department inquiry has found that six department attorneys did not knowingly conceal the destruction of 162 boxes of potential evidence in a multibillion-dollar lawsuit over mismanaged Indian money.

"The lack of intentional wrongdoing is borne out by the record," said the report, unsealed recently by U.S. District Judge Royce Lamberth.

Dennis Gingold, the attorney representing thousands of American Indian plaintiffs in the class-action suit over the squandered money, called the report a whitewash to cover malfeasance by former high-ranking Treasury officials.

The American Indian trust funds were created in 1887 to manage royalties from grazing, logging, mining and oil drilling on Indian land. But

record keeping was shoddy and in some cases money was stolen, used for other federal programs or never collected, the government has acknowledged.

The Indians say the losses total at least \$10 billion.

In late 1999, Lamberth ordered the government to reconstruct the trust fund accounts and reform the current management system — a ruling upheld by the U.S. Court of Appeals.

In December 1999, a court-appointed investigator criticized the Treasury Department for not immediately notifying the court that 162 boxes of historical documents had been destroyed at its Hyattsville, Md., records office between Nov. 23, 1998 and Jan. 28, 1999, in violation of the court's order.

"This is a system out of control,"

wrote Alan Balaran, the special master assigned by the court. Balaran said the attorneys who did not notify the court had violated professional their ethics.

A Treasury Department review called the destruction by the six attorneys handling the accounts deeply embarrassing.

The review recommended mentoring and communication skill training for four of the attorneys and a one-day suspension for two of those attorneys. Two others no longer worked for the Treasury Department when the review was completed and could not be disciplined.

The Treasury Department fought the release of the report for 11 months, arguing it contained personnel matters.

In unsealing the report, Lamberth

noted that Treasury had at least notified the court of its steps to correct attorney misconduct, in contrast to the Interior and Justice departments.

"Neither of those agencies has provided any report whatsoever ... demonstrating that they have not held any attorney accountable in any way whatsoever for any misconduct in this litigation," he wrote.

The government's handling of the trust fund case has been dealt serious blows in past weeks.

A court-appointed investigator has issued two scathing reports: one that the Interior has done nothing to reconstruct how much should be in the Indian accounts; the other, that a \$40 million computerized accounting system may have to be scrapped.

And two weeks ago, Balaran criticized the government for allowing destruction of archived e-mails potentially related to the case.

### Bloomington High Gets Rid of American Indian Mascot

BLOOMINGTON, IL. (AP) — Bloomington High School's athletic teams will keep the same name but get rid of the American Indian mascot that's personified the nickname.

District 87 school board members vote 5-2 to get rid of American Indian mascots in the district as part of a resolution that forbids mascots identifiable by national origin. The district has been criticized for its representation of the mascot, which opponents say is stereotypical and degrading to American Indians.

Bloomington High's teams will continue to be called "The Purple Raiders."

Despite the vote, changes may not take effect immediately. Board President Diana McCauley said it could take several years to replace sports uniforms, an emblem on the gym floor and other representations of the mascot. Recently, school district workers, according to WJBC radio in Bloomington, removed an emblem from the gym wall.

The vote caps months of debate over the mascot that began in April and included a public forum.

The District 87 vote also affects the mascot at Washington Elementary School, where an Indian chief symbolizes the Warriors. The board has not decided how a new mascot will be chosen.

## Edward Curtis Exhibit Raises Debate

BELLINGHAM, WA. (AP) — A photographic exhibit that features American Indians during the early 20th century has local Tribes questioning its portrayal of Indian life.

"The North American Indian," a collection of photographs by Edward S. Curtis, is on exhibit at the Whatcom Museum of History and Art.

Curtis, who traveled North America from 1899 to 1930, took thousands of images of American Indians.

From that 30-year project grew a 20-volume photographic series that depicts Indians from 80 Tribes — including some that no longer exist.

Curtis said he wanted to document "the old time Indian, his dress, his ceremonies, his life and manners."

But because he often staged his photographs, critics have argued they are not an accurate representation of the Indians or their culture.

Recently, representatives from four Pacific Northwest Tribes expressed mixed feelings about the photos in a panel discussion at the museum.

"The importance of these pictures is that they serve as a way for us to look back and remember," said Harry Cooper, Sr., a Nooksack Elder and cel-

ebrated carver. "I'm 73, and these pictures come from a time when there was no television and no jets. ... It was a time when people got together and became neighbors and good friends."

But Mike Vendiola, coordinator of Western Washington University's Ethnic Student Center and a Swinomish, said it's important to remember that Curtis probably knew little of the people whose lives he was trying to document.

"Anthropologists and ethnographers do not come from that community and in some respects that creates a distortion of that society," said Vendiola.

He said displaying the photos could create problems.

"People can begin to make assumptions, begin to think they know what these communities are about, and begin to generalize about Native Americans in general," he said.

That could lead to some people viewing the photographs and thinking "these are the real Indians" while seeing the modern realities of American Indians as not representative of the Indian experience, he said.

Some of the photographs show Indians doing things they would not typically have done, such as holding

an eagle slain for its feathers, said Ramon Murillo, a Shoshone-Bannock Tribal member who teaches art at North-



Edward S. Curtis

west Indian College on the Lummi Reservation. Indians waited in blinds for eagles, grabbed them and plucked feathers for ceremonial uses, before letting them go, he said.

Murillo, however, said he is glad Curtis' photos exist and are on display.

"To me, its preserving culture," he said. "You are able to see the dignity, the kindness, the human beings."

Whether Curtis' photos are a completely accurate portrayal of the past is not as important as the discussions they generate, said Darrell Hillaire, a member of the Lummi Indian Business Council.

"The most important thing to me is we are alive," he said. "What that symbolizes is we are free to be who we are and as I stand here today, maybe we can talk about being equal."