

NATIVE NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

Yurok Tribe: Federal Government did the Right Thing in Klamath Basin

■ Needed water down river kept traditional fishing alive.

KLAMATH FALLS, OR. (AP) — At the mouth of the Klamath River, there is no talk of storming head gates.

Members of the Yurok Tribe say the federal government did the right thing this spring by shutting off water to Klamath Basin irrigators. That action prompted threats, protests and several successful attempts to force open the head gates and let the water flow.

The water was held back from farmers for Coho salmon in the Klamath River and two types of sucker in Upper Klamath Lake, all protected under the Endangered Species Act.

Yuroks are fishing for fall Chinook. They have always been salmon fishers. Their reservation is a narrow ribbon along the course of the Klamath River, extending 44 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean.

Even though fall Chinook do not enter the Klamath Basin debate, Yuroks say the extra water sent into the Klamath River helps all the Chinook by making the river faster and colder.

Although commercial fishing along the Northern California coast has been largely closed for a decade and sport fishing has been cut sharply, Tribal fishing, recognized by law, has continued. Last year Tribal members caught 29,718 fall Chinook, twice the allowed

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harvest of the year before.

This year's Tribal quota is 60,000, the second-largest quota in 25 years.

Nora Osburne, 28, who pitched a tent on a sandbar three weeks ago and has caught 613 fall Chinook in gill nets, will give the fish she catches to 96 members of her extended family who live as far away as San Jose, California.

Catching salmon and giving them to family members, she said, are important Tribal traditions.

"If it wasn't for our Elders showing us what to do, we wouldn't be out here

doing this," she said. "I want my kids out here doing this and showing their kids how it's done."

Troy Fletcher, Executive Director of the Tribe and a Tribal member, said that by cutting off the farmers' water, the federal government showed that Tribal rights for water needed by salmon trumps irrigators' rights.

"This year the administration did the right thing and put the needs of fish and the Tribes over the project's junior water right holders, Fletcher said. "If you look at it, there really was no other choice."

Archaeologists Dig Near Lyon's Bluff Burial Mound

STARKVILLE, MS. (AP) — Hundreds of years ago, Native Americans trod the earth at this site. They fished in the creek, planted and gathered crops, worshipped and celebrated at the enigmatic earthen mound that still rises mysteriously from the black prairie.

Today, the Oktibbeha County site, owned by John Clark Sorrels and almost ringed by Line Creek and Clay County, is under the sway of Mississippi State University archaeology students looking for clues about the site's former inhabitants and their customs.

The site, on what is called Lyon's Bluff, recently hosted a field school for the students, who are led by Evan Peacock, an archaeology professor associated with the Cobb Institute of Archaeology at MSU.

Peacock talks about and shows off the site with great enthusiasm, calling the site "extraordinarily well preserved."

"This could possibly be one of the finest sites in the Southeast," said Peacock. "I have to thank the Sorrels for allowing us to dig here, and for the care they've taken of the site."

The work follows two earlier digs at the site, in the 1930s and the 1960s. The 1930s work concentrated on finding artifacts for the state museum, while the

1960s survey of the site revealed several burial sites.

"I was amazed by the skeletons they found here (in the 1930s)," said Sorrels. "(The archaeologists) called them frames."

Peacock and his students were looking to make a more thorough survey of the site.

"In the last 30 years, archaeological methods and techniques have improved tremendously," said Peacock. "This allows us to make a more controlled excavation here than has been done previously."

One of those new methods is technological.

With the cooperation of NASA and a professor from the University of Mississippi, the budding archaeologists located traces of five houses with the help of an orbiting satellite.

The technique, called remote sensing, showed horizontal positions of trenches dug for house walls and artifacts that lay below the ground, but gave no clues as to how deep the wall foundations or artifacts lay.

"This technique (remote sensing) helps to eliminate random digging, and also helps to preserve the site," said Peacock.

"We want to answer the basic questions about this site — when the site was occupied, how long it was occupied. We want to look at the artifacts and see how this site connected to other parts of the region."

Peacock noted that the Native Americans in the area were among the first agriculturalists in Mississippi, but questions still remain about their farming habits.

"We've found plant remains at the site here," said Peacock. "The big question is whether the inhabitants raised crops here at the mound site, or if the surrounding sites grew the crops and brought them here."

In one excavation unit on the site, a trench was uncovered that had been dug for wall posts and then filled. The unit also showed signs that dirt from that particular unit might have been used to build the mound.

Another unit, described by Peacock as a 'garbage site,' yielded a wealth of pottery shards, deer bones and mussel shells, among other items of antiquity.

"These things would have been the waste of this community," said Peacock. "But they're valuable to us now, to tell us how the people lived."

Among the day's finds from digging were the bowl of a tobacco pipe and a piece of painted pottery, which Peacock said is not found often at farm sites.

At yet another unit, Angie Steen and a fellow student worked on digging out a hole that was already 2 feet deep.

"This is hot, hard work," said Steen. "But we've found some interesting pottery shards."

Steen and Peacock then discussed what charcoal, of which there was a trace in Steen's unit, might tell them about that unit.

Each of the excavated areas at the site contained what Peacock called "undisturbed midden," a layer of soil over the foundations of the Natives' houses, which is where most of the artifacts are found.

"This site is in extraordinary shape," said Peacock. "This site used to be used for row crops, but below the plow line things look really good."

None of the units being excavated are actually on the mound, though one unit sits on a slope off a mezzanine level of the mound.

That is where the Natives might have danced or sat during ceremonies taking place on the apex of the earthen structure.

"We have no plans to excavate the mound itself," said Peacock. "The 1930s excavation dug down to the bottom of the mound, and it's so well preserved, we don't want to do any more damage to it."

Much of what is being excavated is either bagged as it is dug from the ground, or sifted from the excavated dirt using running water and screens.

The site is yielding much more than some other digs might have, said Peacock.

"A lot of places have very acidic soil, but things are extraordinarily preserved here," he said.

Peacock remarked on the snail shells that have been uncovered and what they say about the site.

"These," he said, picking some shells from a group that had already been sifted, "are 600 to 700 years old, and they still have their color bands. These snails probably denote an oak forest, which was here before the Indians arrived."

"Many people don't think about the Indians changing things," said Peacock. "But they did. They cleared land and burned land. There are different kinds of snails for every change."

A marker on the mound, placed by the Daughters of the American Revolution in 1934, declares the site to be a "Chocchiuma" village that was wiped out by the Chickasaws and Choctaws. Peacock has his doubts about those contentions.

"The Chocchiuma are poorly known," said Peacock. "This could have been a Chocchiuma site, but we can't be sure. That story was probably folklore that gained credibility as time went on."

"The styles (of the pottery and other artifacts) are hard to distinguish, over a large area, especially in the prehistoric era," he said. "Two thousand years ago the Choctaws hadn't even appeared."

The field school that Peacock is leading is held every two years.

"To do what we really want to do, we need about two more seasons," said Peacock.

That would put the completion of this round of excavation in 2005.

Abenakis Protest Construction Over Burial Site

HOLDERNESS, N.H. (AP) — About 60 American Indians turned out for a Labor Day demonstration to protest the expansion of a science center over what they say are burial grounds.

The Abenakis say construction at the Squam Lakes Natural Science Center will harm a sacred burial and ceremonial site.

Center Director Will Abbott said there is no evidence burial grounds will be affected. But those who turned out for the protest, including Chief Charlie True, head of New Hampshire's Abenakis, said otherwise.

"This ground is very sacred to us. Our ancestors are buried here," said True.

The demonstrators carried signs, one of which said "We Don't Bulldoze Your Graveyards."

"There are expansive burials here and I don't think anyone in New Hampshire

wants to see burials dug up, not in their cemeteries, not in our unmarked cemeteries, nowhere," said True.

State Archaeologist, Gary Hume, has sided with the Abenakis. He has said the center has listened but not heard, read but not comprehended.

Though no human bones have been unearthed at the construction site — the center hired an independent archaeologist to monitor the excavation work. Hume said mounting evidence shows the site sits atop New Hampshire's largest known Abenaki settlement.

Abbott said the center was sensitive to the fact that Native Americans had used part of its property for at least 5,000 years, but he said aborting the \$1.2 million project was not an option. He claimed the project would disturb less than one-tenth of an acre, or 3,700 square feet.