

Hoopa Valley Tribal Council

Hoopa Valley Tribe

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HOOPA VALLEY TRIBE

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State Court Blocks Trump Federal Contract with Westlands Water District for Million Acre-Foot of Trinity River Water.

Undisclosed Finances and Vague Federal Contract Left Court in the Dark.

Door Now Wide Open for Biden Administration to Revise Contract and Make Westlands Repay Longstanding Debt to Restore Decimated Salmon Fisheries.

“The court’s ruling at last exposes how the Trump Administration was complicit in signing a water contract that failed to collect Westlands debt for past and future environmental restoration costs”, said Hoopa Valley Tribal Chairman Joe Davis.

“The Westlands Water District would not exist but for the pure and life-giving water that the Bureau of Reclamation exported from the Trinity River into the Central Valley Project for decades”, added Hoopa Fisheries Director Michael Orcutt.

“The transfer of wealth to industrial agriculture devastated our Trinity River fishery, impoverished our people, and poisoned vast areas of Central Valley wildlife habitat and agricultural land”, said Vice Chairman Everett Colegrove.

“Congress enacted the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) in 1992 to make sure that those who profited by damaging the environment would pay to restore it,” said Hoopa Tribal Council Member Daniel Jordan. He added, “Not only that, Congress recognized that the Bureau of Reclamation’s history managing dams on the Trinity River showed it could not be trusted to act alone. Therefore, the CVPIA empowered our Tribe to set and enforce the

terms for Trinity River fishery restoration. The contract rejected by the Court failed to ensure that outcome.”

“With rights come responsibility, and we took seriously our responsibility under the CVPIA to lead Trinity River fishery restoration”, said Fisheries Director Orcutt.

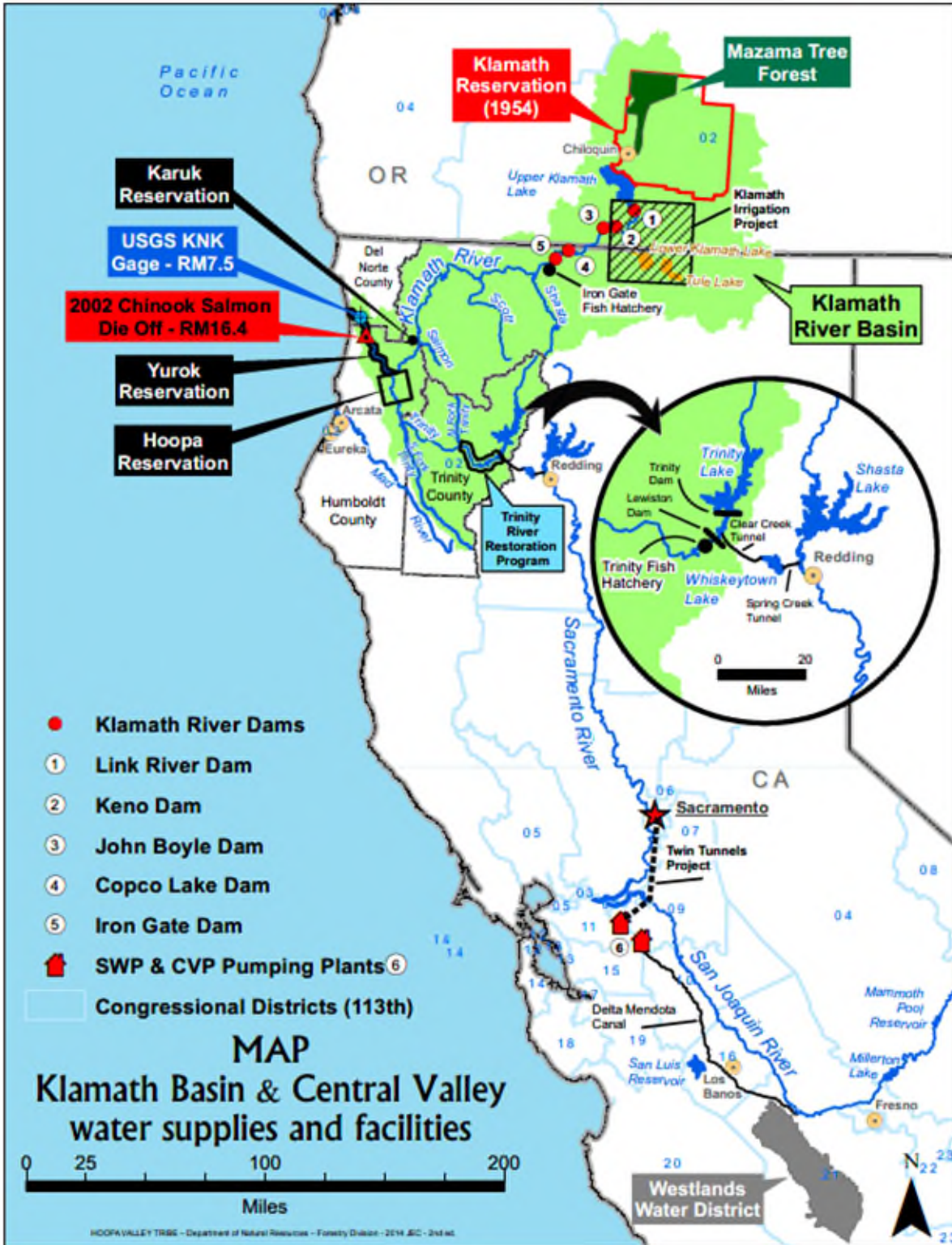
“On December 19, 2000, my brother, then tribal Chairman Duane Sherman, signed the Trinity restoration agreement on Hoopa’s most sacred grounds with Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt. We consider that agreement to be a modern-day treaty”, said Council Member Jill Sherman-Warne.



“Environmental justice and protection of tribal rights are twin policy pillars of the Biden administration. Today, we believe that the Biden Administration’s ongoing defense of Trump’s actions to gut the CVPIA betrays those policies”, said Vice Chairman Colegrove.

“Enough is enough”, said Chairman Davis. “As Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black said of the duty owed to Indian rights, ‘Great nations, like great men, should keep their word’. It is time for the Department of the Interior to revoke the Westlands contract, allocate and collect restoration costs from CVP contractors, and write new contracts that fully protect and enforce reclamation law and federal trust duties to our Tribe.”

The case is *Westlands Water District v. All Persons Interested*, No. F083632 & F084202, Court of Appeals of the State of California, Fifth Appellate District (August 7, 2023).



END