



Media Release

Klamath Fish Health Assessment Team on High Alert for Signs of Fish Mortality

To report occurrences of numerous dead or sick fish in the Klamath River or its tributaries please call: 1-800-852-7550

For Immediate Release

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With the drought exacerbating low flow conditions that contribute to high water temperatures and high incidence of disease on the Klamath River, the Klamath Fish Health Assessment Team (KFHAT) is working to prevent fish die-offs on the river, and is asking local groups and individuals to help watch the river for signs that such an event is happening.

KFHAT is a technical workgroup which formed during the summer of 2003 with the purpose of providing early warning and a coordinated response effort to address, and if possible avoid, a fish kill event in the anadromous portion of the Klamath River basin.

The anadromous portion of the river is the area from below Iron Gate dam to the ocean where salmonids can be found. Anadromous fish hatch in the river, swim to the ocean, and then return to spawn.

KFHAT has created a network through which current information about river and fish health conditions in the Klamath Basin can be quickly shared among participants, the general public, and resource managers. The severe drought throughout California has resulted in low flows, high water temperatures and high incidence of disease prevalence for salmon and steelhead in the Klamath River.

Because of these conditions, the entities that comprise KFHAT are engaged in hands-on daily observations of river and fish conditions throughout the Klamath and Trinity River Basins. KFHAT provides a forum, through regular conference calls and an email distribution list, to exchange real-time information about river and fish health conditions throughout the Klamath and Trinity River basins.

Members of KFHAT have also been active in preparing for a fish kill event in case one occurs anywhere in the basin. Scattered reports of fish mortality in the Salmon River, South Fork Trinity, and the mainstem Trinity River have elevated levels of concern among fish managers and scientists.

Why is the Klamath River Important?

The Klamath River is home to the third largest salmon run on the West Coast and is thought to have the highest potential for complete salmon recovery in the United States. In approximately three weeks, the main portion of the fall-run Chinook run will enter the river, dramatically increasing the number of fish in the Klamath River. The KFHAT team intends to provide water and fish managers with accurate

and up-to-date information about the health of these fish, as well as of environmental conditions that could contribute to or cause a fish kill.

The assessment team would greatly appreciate local citizens, organizations, and agencies notifying KFHat if they believe they may be witnessing a fish kill event. Fish kills typically occur in short periods of time and can result in high numbers of sick and dead fish. Fish kills can occur from a variety of causes, including disease and toxic chemicals. Quick response by trained people is important. Individuals are cautioned not to attempt to examine fish or put themselves in harm's way during a fish kill event.

To report a fish kill call: **1-800-852-7550**

More information about KFHat and current river and fish health conditions are available at:
<http://www.kbmp.net/collaboration/kfhat>