

= Klamath River =

The Klamath River ( Karuk : Ishkêesh , Klamath : Koke , Yurok : Hehlkeek ' We @-@ Roy ) flows 263 miles ( 423 km ) through Oregon and northern California in the United States , emptying into the Pacific Ocean . By average discharge , the Klamath is the second largest river in California after the Sacramento River . It drains an extensive watershed of almost 16 @,@ 000 square miles ( 41 @,@ 000 km<sup>2</sup> ) that stretches from the arid country of south @-@ central Oregon to the temperate rainforest of the Pacific coast . Unlike most rivers , the Klamath begins in the plains and flows toward the mountains ? carving its way through the rugged Cascade Range and Klamath Mountains before reaching the sea . The upper basin once contained vast freshwater marshes that provided habitat for abundant wildlife , including millions of migratory birds ; now it is largely agricultural due to European settling , while the mountainous lower basin remains wild . The watershed is known for this peculiar geography , and the Klamath has been called " a river upside down " by National Geographic magazine .

The Klamath is the most important coastal river south of the Columbia River for anadromous fish migration . Its salmon , steelhead and rainbow trout have adapted to unusually high water temperatures and acidity levels relative to other rivers in the Pacific Northwest . The numerous fish were a major source of food for Native Americans , who have inhabited the basin for at least 7 @,@ 000 years . The first Europeans to enter the Klamath River basin were fur trappers for the Hudson 's Bay Company in the 1820s ; they established the Siskiyou Trail along the Klamath and Trinity rivers into the Sacramento Valley . Within several decades of white settlement , native peoples were forced into reservations .

During the latter days of the California Gold Rush , increasing numbers of miners began working the Klamath River and its tributaries . Their impact on the surrounding environment was highly detrimental , as well as their impact Native American Klamath Tribes . The greed of the Gold Rush left most tribes with only 10 % of the indigenous population . Steamboats operated briefly on the large lakes in the upper basin before they were replaced by railroads in the late 19th century . In the 19th and 20th centuries , the upper basin became a rich agricultural region , and many dams were built to provide irrigation water and hydroelectric power . In the 1960s , the Klamath was targeted as part of a much larger scheme to augment water supplies in central and southern California ; however , these works never materialized .

Because the Klamath includes many of the longest free @-@ flowing stretches of river in California , along with excellent whitewater runs , it has become a popular recreational river . However , dams and diversions in the upper basin have caused water quality issues on the lower half of the Klamath . Environmental groups and native tribes have proposed broad changes to water use in the Klamath Basin , principally the removal of some dams on the river to expand fish habitat . They put forth their concerns in what is now the Klamath Basin Restoration Agreement , a water management plan signed by local communities , governments , tribal groups , environmentalists , and fishermen . The proposal has been endorsed by the U.S. Department of the Interior but has not been authorized by the United States Congress .

= = Course = =

Upper Klamath Lake , filling a broad valley at the foot of the eastern slope of the southern High Cascades , is the source of the Klamath River . Its headstreams , however , begin over 100 miles ( 160 km ) away ? as far as Crater Lake and the Oregon ? Nevada border . The first 1 @-@ mile ( 1 @.@ 6 km ) stretch of the Klamath River is known as the Link River . Not long after , however , the river is impounded in an 18 @-@ mile ( 29 km ) long reservoir near Klamath Falls , Lake Ewauna , where it is connected by the B canal ? which is capable of diverting water between the rivers in either direction as needed , to the Lost River and passes the nearly dry bed of Lower Klamath Lake . After it flows out of this reservoir , it passes through four more hydroelectric dams before it crosses the Oregon ? California state border and turns south near the town of Hornbrook towards Mount Shasta . However , the river soon swings west to receive the Shasta River and the Scott River ,

cutting deep into the head of its canyon through the Klamath Mountains .

The route through the High and Western Cascades and the Klamath Mountains constitutes the majority of the river 's course and takes it from the arid high desert climate of its upper watershed into a temperate rainforest nourished by Pacific rains . From the Scott River confluence , the river generally runs west along the south side of the Siskiyou Mountains until it takes a sharp southward turn near the town of Happy Camp . From there , it flows southwest over whitewater rapids into the Klamath National Forest , receiving the Salmon River , and passes the unincorporated community of Orleans . At Weitchpec , the river reaches the southernmost point in its entire course and veers sharply northwards as it receives the Trinity River . The Trinity River confluence also marks the point where the Klamath 's current dramatically slows . For the remainder of its course , the Klamath flows generally northwest through the Hoopa Valley and Yurok Indian Reservations , passing the town of Klamath and flowing out to sea 16 miles ( 26 km ) south of Crescent City . The mouth of the Klamath River is at Requa , in an area shared by the Yurok Reservation and Redwood National Park . The Klamath River estuary is recognized for protection by the California Bays and Estuaries Policy .

= = Watershed = =

Extending from arid eastern Oregon to the cold and rainy Northern California coast , the Klamath River watershed drains parts of three Oregon counties and five counties in California and includes a diversity of landscapes . The northernmost part of the watershed is high desert country drained by the Williamson River and the Sprague River , both which flow generally southwest into Upper Klamath Lake . The middle basin is characterized by extensive wetland , grassland , and agricultural areas , and is partially filled by two major bodies of water : Upper and Lower Klamath Lake . The extensive lower basin , which encompasses over one half of the 15 @, @ 751 @-@ square @-@ mile ( 40 @, @ 790 km<sup>2</sup> ) watershed , is composed mainly of rugged mountains , forests and canyons .

Several other West Coast and interior drainage basins border on that of the Klamath River . On the northwest are the Rogue River and Umpqua River in Oregon and the Smith River in California . On the east there is the closed Harney Basin and a small portion of the Great Basin . The south side of the Klamath River watershed is bounded by the Sacramento River and its upper tributaries , including the Pit River , and on the southwest side are the Mad River and Redwood Creek . The western boundary of the upper Klamath Basin is formed by the High Cascades and the Klamath Mountains , one of the southernmost extents of the Cascade Range , and the California Coast Ranges cover the southwestern watershed . The Klamath is one of only three rivers that begins east of the Cascades and flows into the Pacific Ocean ; the other two are the Columbia and the Fraser .

Most human use of the watershed is limited to the upper basin . Despite the semiarid climate , dams have been built , irrigation water has been supplied from the Klamath and Lost rivers , and plentiful groundwater has been drawn to transform most of the upper Klamath Basin to farmland . At least 11 @, @ 000 years ago , Lower Klamath and Tule Lakes in the rainy season would combine into one giant freshwater marsh that was nearly 290 square miles ( 750 km<sup>2</sup> ) large . This , combined with the over 100 square miles ( 260 km<sup>2</sup> ) of Upper Klamath Lake , formed a temporary habitat for millions of migratory birds . These lakes are all remnants of a large Ice Age lake , Lake Modoc , that covered about 1 @, @ 100 square miles ( 2 @, @ 800 km<sup>2</sup> ) . Although all of the marshlands have been developed with the exception of Upper Klamath Lake , about 3 @. @ 7 million migrating birds still pass through the watershed each year .

Despite its plentiful flow in California , the Klamath does not supply significant amounts of water to irrigators and municipal users in central and southern portions of the state . The Klamath Reclamation Project in the Klamath Falls area supplies water to local irrigators , and the Central Valley Project diverts water from the Trinity River to supply irrigation water to the Sacramento Valley . Other tributaries of the Klamath , including the Lost and Shasta rivers , are also diverted for irrigation . Water use of the lower Klamath ? one of the last relatively free @-@ flowing rivers in the state of California ? has been debated for decades among conservationists , tribes , irrigators , and government agencies , and its eventual fate is still unclear .

## == Tributaries ==

Tributaries of the Klamath River are listed below . Numbers ( RM / RKM ) after the tributary names denote the river miles ( river kilometers ) where they enter the Klamath , or the specific tributary under which it is listed .

## == Flooding ==

The lower and middle sections of the Klamath River are vulnerable to flooding , and major floods have occurred in years where major flooding has taken place in Northern California , particularly in the wake of Pineapple Express storms that bring large amounts of warm rain to Northern California . Significant floods on the Klamath River have occurred in 1926 ? 1927 , 1955 , 1964 , 1997 , and 2005 , in several cases changing the course of the river . The Christmas flood of 1964 was particularly devastating , with a high water reaching 55 feet ( 17 m ) , inundating the towns of Klamath and Klamath Glen and destroying most of the Highway 101 bridge crossing the river . The highway bridge was rebuilt in a different location , though entrances to the old bridge still stand .

The mouth of the Klamath and nearby sections of the river are susceptible to oceanic tsunami surges , and fatalities have occurred there during the 1964 and 2011 Pacific tsunamis .

## == Geology ==

The Upper Klamath Basin , defined by the drainage area of the Klamath River above Iron Gate Dam , is a unique transitional area between the Cascade Range to the west and the Basin and Range Province of the northern Great Basin to the southeast . This region extends from the southern Lower Klamath Lake area into the Lost River and Upper Klamath Lake basins . Crustal stretching and block faulting created a topography with characteristics similar to both regions . Almost the entire basin is a graben region , bearing basin and range characteristics , formed by uplifting and subsidence along several north ? south faults .

Pre @-@ Quaternary , igneous and sedimentary rock compose the Yonna Formation , which crosses much of the region and rises above the surface in large outcroppings of solid rock in many of the ridges . Underlying rocks are generally younger from east to west . The many ridges crossing the upper Klamath Basin divide it into valleys with up to 330 feet ( 100 m ) of vertical relief , and drainage patterns generally follow the topography . An extensive geothermal system occurs deep underground within the upper basin , creating hot springs and artesian springs , but is not well understood . Further south , in the Shasta River area in Siskiyou County , much of the underlying rock is composed of lava flows issuing from the Mount Shasta volcanic region .

The same age pattern is true in the Cascade Range and Klamath Mountains that cover the western half of the Klamath River watershed . As the North American Plate moved slowly southwestward over the past 10 million years , successive oceanic terranes dating from the Cambrian to the late Jurassic were added to the bulk of the North American continent . There are four distinct terranes from west to east . While the coastal mountains date to less than 3 million years ago , the farther inland High Cascades are as old as 7 @.@ 5 million years . Granite batholiths , overlying sedimentary rock , and volcanic rock were crumpled into the massif of southwestern Oregon and northwestern California . Instead of being diverted southwards , however , the Klamath continued to flow westward and created a steep @-@ walled gorge through the rising range . One of these terranes brought with it a long north ? south running band of easily eroded mica that now lies about 30 miles ( 48 km ) inland from the Pacific coast of Northern California . When the Klamath encountered this layer , it began cutting its canyon along the mica instead of continuing southwest to the Pacific , resulting in the sharp northward bend where the Trinity River joins . The lower Trinity also follows portions of the mica and its south fork as well .

## == History ==

= = = Early inhabitants and settlers = = =

Human habitation on the Klamath dates to at least 7 @, @ 000 years ago . Many of the Native American groups along the river depended on the vast runs of Pacific salmon , second only to that of the Columbia River . These Tribes included the Shasta along the mid and upper river , the Yurok , Hupa , and Karuk along the canyons of the lower river and the Modoc , Klamath and Yahooskin in the arid valleys of the upper basin . The Shasta Tribe controlled 129 miles ( 208 km ) , over half of the middle and upper Klamath River flowing through the great Shasta Tribal lands . The Yurok were probably one of the more powerful Tribes on the Klamath River behind the Shasta Tribe , controlling about 30 miles ( 48 km ) of the lower Klamath River and a large section of the Northern California coast . Along with the Hupa and Karuk , the lower to mid @-@ upper Tribes caught salmon from the river with weirs , basket traps and even harpoons . One well @-@ known ancient fishing ground is Ishi Pishi Falls , a set of rapids on the river near the confluence with the Salmon River . Most of the upstream groups had a nomadic hunting @-@ gathering lifestyle and did not depend on salmon as much as downstream Tribes . The Klamath River 's name was recorded by Europeans in the 19th century derived from the word klamet or the Klamath Tribe , but prior to white contact , many names were used to refer to the river , including Ishkêesh and Koke . The Klamath Tribe 's name came from the Upper Chinookan word / ?áma? / , literally " they of the river " .

In the late 1820s , fur trappers of the Hudson 's Bay Company traveling south from Fort Vancouver reached the Klamath River basin . The first party to see the Klamath River was led by Alexander McLeod in the winter of 1826 ? 27 . In 1828 , the Jedediah Smith fur trapping expedition was helped across the Trinity River by the Yurok and camped on the east side of the Trinity River . His clerk , Harrison G. Rogers , wrote , " Mr. Smith purchases all the beaver furs he can from them , " suggesting that beaver were then plentiful on the Trinity . Joseph Grinnell , in *Fur @-@ bearing Mammals of California* , noted that beaver had been present on other Klamath River tributaries such as the Scott River and Shasta River , and further cited a Fish and Game report of beaver from 1915 ? 1917 on High Prairie Creek at the mouth of the Klamath River near Requa , California . Within a matter of years , the plentiful beavers in the Klamath Basin had been mostly wiped out . Beaver dams had previously been an important factor in stream habitat in the Klamath River watershed , helping to moderate the power of floods and creating extensive wetlands . The loss of the beaver dams resulted in detrimental consequences for watercourses in the basin , exacerbating the power of winter floods , and causing severe erosion . Trapping parties eventually moved southwest into the Sacramento Valley and blazed an extension of the Siskiyou Trail , an early path between the Oregon Territory and San Francisco Bay . Despite the environmental implications , extensive and fertile meadows left behind by the draining of beaver ponds attracted many settlers to the region later on .

The 1850s saw discoveries of rich placer and lode gold deposits along the predominantly Shasta areas of the Klamath , Trinity , Shasta and other rivers in northwestern California . The 1850s also brought a greed @-@ fueled murderous rampage upon the indigenous people inhabiting the regions . Villages full of men , women , children , and infants were either hacked up or shot for the potential gold that would be harmfully extracted . The gold is thought to have originated from volcanic activity in the Klamath Mountains . Miners searching for gold in the Klamath Mountains and Trinity Alps in the aftermath of the California Gold Rush first discovered gold along Salmon Creek in the spring of 1850 , and additional deposits were found on the main stem by July . Gold was also discovered in great quantities in Shasta lands at French Gulch and Yreka . Several place names in the Klamath Basin originate from this era , including that of the Scott River , which is named for pioneer John Walter Scott . Gold deposits are still present in the Klamath River watershed even though it was mined far past the end of the gold rush .

In 1864 , the Native Americans of the Klamath Basin and surrounding area signed a treaty that had them cede 20 million acres ( 8 @, @ 100 @, @ 000 ha ) of land to the United States and forced them to move to the newly created Klamath Indian Reservation . This reservation clumped the Yurok ,

Karuk , and Hoopa tribes into one small area . Eventually , the tribes began to profit from the sale of timber produced on the reservation , although unfairly distributed because of the lack of consideration of the three differing tribes . In 1954 , however , Congress removed their federal recognition and the reservation was no longer economically successful . The tribes won back federal recognition in the 1970s , but by then poverty was widespread among tribal members .

= = = Early industry and development = = =

Beginning in the early 20th century , steamboats began operating on Lower Klamath Lake between Siskiyou County , California , and Klamath Falls , Oregon . The steamboats completed a link between Klamath Falls and a railroad branch line following the McCloud River ? the final part of which was called the Bartle Fast Freight Road , after Bartle , California . The end of this line , Laird 's Landing , was the beginning of the Lower Klamath Lake steamboat line , which began operating with an 80 @-@ foot ( 24 m ) screw steamer in 1905 . By 1909 , however , the railroad had circumnavigated Lower Klamath Lake directly to Klamath Falls . The steamboat line fell into disuse ? and much of Lower Klamath Lake was later drained and filled in .

In the early 1910s and 1920s , logging was a growing industry on the west side of the upper Klamath River valley , especially around Upper Klamath Lake . The Great Northern Railway and Southern Pacific Railroad built a joint @-@ use line running along the eastern shore of the lake , delivering logs from the north side to a sawmill 3 miles ( 4 @.@ 8 km ) downstream from the outlet of the lake . Many of the seasonal marshlands surrounding the lake and rivers were diked in this period to host lumber operations . In 1919 , the first Link River Dam , a timber crib dam , was constructed at the outlet of Upper Klamath Lake , raising it by about 16 feet ( 5 m ) . Steamboats continued mail , passenger and freight operations on Upper Klamath Lake until about 1928 , in a period when many of the lumber companies shut down due to drought .

With lumber a declining industry in the upper Klamath Basin , the economy slowly transitioned to agriculture . The Klamath Reclamation Project , established by the Bureau of Reclamation in the early 20th century , involved the construction of two dams on the river and additional dams on many of its tributaries , as well as the final draining of Lower Klamath and Tule Lakes . The Bureau of Reclamation was not the only user of the river during this period ; in the late 1950s PacifiCorp and California @-@ Oregon Power Company ( COPCO ) constructed three more dams on the river downstream . These dams , however , sparked a great controversy over water quality in the lower section of the river and the dependence of the river 's annual salmon runs on it .

= = = Natural history = = =

The river is considered a prime habitat for Chinook salmon , Coho salmon , and rainbow trout . Once the river was the third @-@ largest producer of salmon on the West Coast , but today , only a fraction of the river 's historic runs remain since the construction of six dams between 1908 and 1962 . Coho salmon in the Klamath River are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act . In 1963 , the upper Trinity River ? the largest single tributary to the Klamath ? was virtually removed from the Klamath drainage with the completion of the Lewiston and Trinity Dams , diverting 90 percent of the Trinity 's flow to the Sacramento Valley . From 1963 to 1991 , only 150 cubic feet per second ( 4 @.@ 2 m<sup>3</sup> / s ) from the main stem above the dams was left to flow to the Klamath . In 1991 , a minimum annual Trinity flow of 340 @,@ 000 acre feet ( 420 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 m<sup>3</sup> ) was established , or about 470 cubic feet per second ( 13 m<sup>3</sup> / s ) .

From the 1920s to the 1960s , four hydroelectric dams were built by the California @-@ Oregon Power Company ( COPCO ) and its successor PacifiCorp on the Klamath River main stem , blocking salmon migration and trapping sediment that formerly replenished downstream gravel bars used by spawning salmon . The possible removal of the dams has been a controversial issue in the region in recent years . Despite intense lobbying by local Native American tribes , conservationists , and fishermen , the 2004 renewal application by PacifiCorp for another 50 @-@ year federal operating license for the dams did not include any provisions for allowing salmon to return to more

than 300 miles ( 483 km ) of former habitat above the dams . In January 2007 , however , the federal government ruled that PacifiCorp must equip four dams with fish ladders , a modification which would potentially cost more than \$ 300 million . PacifiCorp has offered \$ 300 million to upgrade the JC Boyle fish ladder and proposed trucking fish around the Copco Number 1 and Iron Gate dams , after having had been denied a license to build a power generator in Utah . PacifiCorp President Fehrman defended the company 's activities in the area , pointing to other benefits .

A separate controversy surrounds the use of water in the Upper Klamath Basin for irrigated agriculture , which was temporarily halted in 2001 to protect endangered salmon and lake fish during a severe drought . Vice President Dick Cheney personally intervened to ensure water to the agriculture industry rather than to environmental flow . In 2002 , the federal government , under Interior Secretary Gale Norton , provided full water deliveries to irrigators as the drought continued ; despite the fact that Klamath area tribes have treaty rights that predate the settlement of the farmers . Norton argued for a " free market " approach by allowing farmers to sell the water to the Native Americans downstream . That year , the Klamath River system had the largest fish die @-@ off ever recorded . The House Natural Resources Committee investigated Vice President Cheney for having released extra water to ranchers for possible political gain .

According to biologists from the State of California and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service , the atypical low flow in the river along with high fish return numbers and high water temperatures allowed for a gill rot disease to kill at least 33 @,@ 000 salmon in September 2002 , before they could reproduce . The die @-@ off was downstream of the Trinity inflow , and the salmon of the Trinity were impacted to a greater degree than the Klamath as the Trinity run was at its peak . The report does mention that the official fish die @-@ off estimate of 34 @,@ 056 is probably quite low and could be only half of the actual loss . Klamath River flows as measured at the river gauge in Keno show a low flow of 800 cubic feet per second ( 22 @.@ 7 m<sup>3</sup> / s ) in September 1908 ( before irrigation began ) . During the 2002 fish kill , flows of 475 cubic feet per second ( 13 @.@ 5 m<sup>3</sup> / s ) were recorded . During September of the 2001 irrigation shut @-@ off , an average of 688 cubic feet per second ( 19 @.@ 5 m<sup>3</sup> / s ) was recorded .

In 2011 , the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ( EPA ) approved a plan first introduced in 1992 by California 's state government . The plan called for major cleanup of the lower river in order to protect salmon from phosphorus , nitrogen , and carbonaceous biochemical oxygen demand . It also expressed concern over high water temperatures , algal blooms , and low oxygen levels , although certain fish have adapted to some of these issues . Environmental groups , more than six government agencies , Native American tribes in the basin , and others have worked with the EPA to reduce pollution levels in the Klamath .

= = = = Salmon controversy = = = =

Historically , the Klamath River was once the " third most productive salmon river system in the United States " , after the Columbia and the Sacramento . Eutrophication and raised water temperatures induced by the construction of dams have created worsening conditions for migrating salmon , especially in years of drought . Irrigation along the upper Klamath and the Shasta and Scott rivers , along with the almost @-@ total diversion of the upper Trinity River , have all lowered the total river flow supporting out @-@ migrating young salmon in spring and in @-@ migrating adult salmon in the fall . In the 1960s , a project was proposed to divert the entire Klamath River to Central California and Southern California , an undertaking known as the Klamath Diversion , but this project was defeated . It would have limited salmon to the last 12 miles ( 19 km ) of the entire river . In 2002 , a major fish kill took its toll on the river and the Tribes that depend on it . More than 34 @,@ 000 salmonoids died alone , due to the low waters and poor hindsight , as well as compassion , of those in charge ( PacifiCorp ) . In 2005 , PacifiCorp applied to the federal government to relicense its four hydroelectric dams on the Klamath for up to 50 years . Environmentalists opposed the relicensing , arguing that the dams should be removed to reopen the upper Klamath to salmon .

An agreement was signed on February 18 , 2010 .

Two years of closed @-@ door negotiations among farmers , Indian tribes , fishermen , conservation groups and government agencies had resulted in a plan to work toward a detailed settlement of Klamath water usage . It also called for the removal of four hydroelectric dams ? the Iron Gate Dam and Copco dams 1 and 2 ( in California ) , and the John C. Boyle Dam ( in Oregon ) ? now operating along 300 miles ( 483 km ) of the Klamath River , starting in the year 2020 , as well as for restoration projects . A non @-@ binding " Agreement in Principle " ( AIP ) among four parties ? PacifiCorp , the federal government , California , and Oregon ? to remove the four dams had been announced on November 13 , 2008 . PacifiCorp ratepayers would fund part of the plan and the State of California would fund much of the remaining projected cost . Total cost would be around \$ 800 million . The agreement required the federal government to scientifically assess the costs and benefits of the dam removals , determine whether such action is in the public interest , and to make a final determination by March 31 , 2012 , as to whether the benefits of the project will justify the costs , although that deadline was missed . A local group , the Klamath County Tea Party Patriots , formed to oppose the agreement , and succeeded in unseating local elected officials who were supportive of the deal . On December 31 , 2012 , the parties renewed their agreement , providing more time for federal , Congressional , and California electorate approval to finalize dam removal .

On April 4 , 2013 , the U.S. Department of the Interior released its final environmental impact statement on the plan , recommending the removal of all four dams and \$ 1 billion in other environmental restoration to aid native salmon runs on the Klamath . Ron Wyden , the senior U.S. senator from Oregon , introduced the Klamath Basin Water Recovery and Economic Restoration Act of 2014 , which was cosponsored by his fellow Oregon senator Jeff Merkley and by Nevada senator Dean Heller .

== == Water rights dispute == ==

When the 1864 treaty was signed , the Klamath Tribes , with much less land , became short on the stream water needed for fishing . Although from the 1950s to the 1970s they were not federally recognized , the tribes never lost their water rights , and in 2001 , when Klamath Basin farmers twice sued the U.S. Department of the Interior for more access to irrigation water , their rights were upheld . The tribes ' water allotments for fishing continue to be a large factor in Klamath Basin water disputes in the 21st century . In 2013 , the Tribe 's water rights were enforced for the first time , in what is known as a ' Water Call ' . The Klamath Tribe called upon their in @-@ stream water right , which was enforced by the Water Master . This resulted in almost all upper @-@ basin irrigation being denied water , except for groundwater irrigators . The Klamath Project , however , was not called upon .

== Recreation ==

Whitewater rafting and kayaking are popular recreational activities along the upper Klamath River below the J.C. Boyle Dam , and also along the lower Klamath River downstream of the town of Happy Camp . There are long stretches ? over 100 miles ( 160 km ) in one instance ? of Class I ? II whitewater rapids , while there are some Class III ? IV rapids in some of the narrower stretches . Beyond Weitchpec , the river slows down into a wider , deeper channel . About 13 miles ( 21 km ) of the river is designated Wild , and 175 miles ( 282 km ) Recreational .

Sport fishing is also popular on the Klamath River , with steelhead trout being the most popular , though Chinook salmon are also highly sought after when low salmon returns do not prevent fishing . A fly fishing guide said that the Klamath was one of the most productive steelhead rivers on the West Coast of the United States .

Recreational gold mining is popular along the Klamath and some of its tributaries , including the Salmon and the Trinity . Although simple methods such as panning are still used , some methods use suction pumps ? a practice involving turning over deposits of sediment and spreading them in order to find gold . Debates over the practice , which opponents contend damage water quality ( mercury ) and fish habitat , continue . Currently , suction dredge mining is banned in California until

2016 .

A variety of national forests and wildlife preserves ? including the Klamath National Forest , Six Rivers National Forest , Klamath National Wildlife Refuges Complex , and Lower Klamath National Wildlife Refuge ? are located in the Klamath River watershed . The Klamath National Forest is located in Siskiyou County with a small portion in Oregon , and Six Rivers National Forest is located in the southern Klamath watershed , mostly in the Trinity River watershed . The latter two are located in the Upper Klamath Lake @-@ Lower Klamath Lake area . Lava Beds National Monument , which contains a large array of lava tubes and formations , is also in the Lower Klamath Lake area , to the south of the remnants of the lake .

= = Klamath River Overlook = =

The Klamath River Overlook is a prime spot open to the public for watching the gray whale migration . Look for other marine mammals and a host of seabirds any time of year . Hike ¼ mile down a steep trail to the lower overlook and more dramatic views .

= = The Yurok Tribe 's Klamath Salmon Festival = =

A annual festival takes place along the Klamath River .