

The Klamath Salmon Festival is on Saturday, August 19

August 14, 2023



The Klamath Salmon Festival is on Saturday, August 19. The 59th Salmon Festival is a celebration of dam removal, the healing of the Klamath River. All are invited to the Yurok Tribe's 59th Annual Klamath Salmon Festival on Saturday, August 19 in Klamath. The theme of this year's event is "Celebrating Dam Removal and the Healing of the Klamath River."

"This year, we are inviting everyone to join us in recognizing the historic effort to remove the Klamath dams and make the river whole again," said Joseph L. James, the Chairman of the Yurok Tribe. "Dam removal will bring about a brighter future not just for us, but for every indigenous person, salmon lover and river enthusiast around the world. We are extremely grateful for everyone who sacrificed so much to make the dam removal dream a reality."

The Yurok Tribe puts on the annual Salmon Festival to provide an opportunity for people to collectively acknowledge the significance of Klamath River in our daily lives. The family-oriented festival includes: a parade, the Yurok Tribal Court's Ney-puey Run, cultural demonstrations, Stick Game, Softball and Indian Card Game Tournaments, live music, ample kids' activities, Ter-ker-kue' (valley quail) Travelling Petting Zoo Therapy Animals, axe-throwing competition and 130 local vendors. There will be more than a dozen fantastic eating options, ranging from Indian Taco booths to an assortment of fabulous food trucks.

The Rez Chopped cooking competition is returning to the event too. Thanks to the Yurok Economic Development Corporation, live music will be performed by Object Heavy. Fronted by dynamic vocalist Richard Love, Object Heavy offers a captivating fusion of classic soul, smooth harmonies and mesmerizing musicianship that seamlessly blends into easily danceable sound.

The Yurok Tribe partnered with the renowned California Indian Basket Weavers Association (CIBA) to create an elaborate exhibit called Baskets and Fire for the festival. Led by CIBA Chairperson and local resident, Alice Lincoln-Cook, the exhibit will feature a diverse display of traditional basketry as well as a bear grass braiding and wrapping workshop and an acorn-cooking demonstration. CIBA representatives will discuss how the Tribe uses fire or cultural burning to encourage the production of natural basket-weaving materials. Cultural burns are also employed to manage forest fuel loads, maintain healthy ecosystems for wildlife and much more.

There will also be a premiere of a new documentary called “Fire Tender” in the Redwood Hotel conference room at 2pm and 4pm. Co-directed by Ronnie Jo Draper, a Yurok citizen, and Marissa Lila, the highly informative and visually engaging film showcases tribally led efforts to restore traditional burning practices in Yurok ancestral territory. For more information about the documentary - <https://www.wmm.com/sponsored-project/fire-tender/>

The 59th Annual Klamath Salmon Festival is open to all and free to attend. The event kicks off with the Ney-puey 5k at 8am, which is followed by the Ney-puey Fun Run at 9:30am. Please register early at <https://keechaenar.org/klamath-salmon-festival/> Both start at the Yurok Country Visitor Center. The annual parade down Klamath Blvd is at 10am.

The Baskets and Fire Exhibit opens at 10am too. Attendees can participate in bear grass braiding and weaving workshops between 10am and 1pm. A kids’ area with a bounce house, slide and other fun activities is open all day as is the Ter-ker-kue’ Travelling Petting Zoo Therapy Animals.

The Indian Card Game Tournament begins at 11am at the Yurok Country Visitor Center. The Tribe will honor Miss Indian World 2023, Tori McConnell, at 11:30am on the stage. The Stick Game Tournament begins at 12pm. Object Heavy is playing at 12pm and 2pm.

The Rez Chopped cooking competition starts at 12pm. The Axe-throwing Tournament, sponsored by the Yurok Economic Development Corporation, starts at 1pm at the Abalone Bar and Grill. There is a \$10 buy-in and a \$500 guaranteed prize pool. The film “Fire Tender” will be shown at 2pm and 4pm in the Redwood Hotel conference room. The festival will finish up around 4pm. The Aawok Archie Thompson Memorial Softball Tournament starts at 9am on Saturday and Sunday.

No Salmon at the Salmon Festival

In July, the Tribe announced that the annual salmon lunch will not be on offer at the festival because this year’s fall Chinook forecast is one of the lowest on record. The Yurok Tribe also decided to cancel the upcoming 2023 tribal fishery to protect salmon. The Tribe has not had a viable commercial fishery since 2015. In six of the last seven years, the Tribe’s subsistence harvest was approximately equal to or less than one fish per member of the Tribe. In 2017, the Tribal subsistence fishery was completely closed, as it is again this year.

Biologists predict only 23,614 adult natural origin salmon will return to the Klamath in the late summer and fall. Prior to the installation of the dams, the Klamath supported approximately 1 million spring and fall Chinook salmon. Spring Chinook stocks are in extremely poor shape too. The decline of the Klamath's once prolific salmon populations is attributed to several factors, but the soon-to-be-removed Klamath dams are by far the single biggest impediment to fish production.

The dams block hundreds of miles of historic salmon habitat, foment toxic algae and create the ideal conditions for population-depleting fish disease outbreaks. In 2002, more than 60,000 salmon died from Ichthyophthirius multifiliis or Ich and Columnaris. Additionally, there were widespread juvenile fish kills in 2014, 2015 and 2021, due to a different pathogen called Ceratonova Shasta (C. Shasta).

The removal of the dams is expected to markedly reduce disease levels. It will also reopen more than 400 miles of habitat that has been inaccessible to fish for more than a century. The first dam will be completely dismantled before the end of September. The remaining three will be removed by the end of 2024. The project is considered the most ambitious salmon restoration effort in history.

Join us in celebrating the healing of the Klamath River on Saturday, August 19 at 190 Klamath Blvd!

*Secure parking and shuttles will be available off of Klamath Mill Road. Take exit 769 (Terwer Valley) and follow the salmon signs.

*The Salmon Festival is a pet-free event.

For more information, please visit our event page <https://fb.me/e/3K25qa44F>