

Karuk Tribe of California

PRESS RELEASE

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For more information: Craig Tucker, Media Spokesman, Karuk Tribe, 916-207-8294
Leo Kay, EPA Press Office, 415-947-4306

EPA Honors 39 Western Environmental Heroes *Karuk Tribe, Willie Nelson, Patagonia, among this year's winners*

SAN FRANCISCO - During the agency's eighth annual Environmental Awards Ceremony in San Francisco today, U.S. EPA Regional Administrator Wayne Nastri presented plaques to three dozen organizations and individuals throughout the Pacific Southwest in recognition of their efforts to protect and preserve the environment in 2005.

"These organizations and individuals have applied creativity, teamwork and leadership in addressing many of the West's most sensitive and complex environmental challenges," Nastri said. "Thanks to their efforts, our air, water and land will be cleaner and safer for generations to come. The winners set an example for all of us to follow."

The Region 9 Environmental Awards program acknowledges commitment and significant contributions to the environment in California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, Pacific Islands and tribal lands. Thirty nine groups and individuals were selected from more than 160 nominees received this year from businesses, media, local, government officials, tribes, environmental organizations and citizen activists.

This year's winners include: Willie Nelson, who is being honored for opening the first biodiesel station in California; Patagonia, for 30 years of forward thinking environmental programs at its headquarters in Ventura, Calif.; and Sandi Tripp and Susan Corum of the Karuk Tribe of California for playing a key role in discovering, promoting, and advocating a timely response to deadly blooms of toxic blue green algae in PacifiCorp's Klamath Reservoirs.

"It's exciting to be recognized for our hard work. I hope that the award will bring more attention to the toxic algae issue and prompt PacifiCorp to take responsibility for the problems their dams create," said Karuk Natural Resources Director Sandi Tripp. Blooms occur in the reservoirs but not in moving water upstream and downstream.

Although the algae blooms occur nearly every year, no one knew what species of algae were present until Karuk Water Quality Coordinator Susan Corum initiated a study. According to Corum, "we knew that the algae created a problem for fish because as the huge mats of algae die and decompose the dissolved oxygen in water is consumed. We were horrified when we found out that the algae is toxic to humans."

The Tribe discovered that the algae *Microcystis aeruginosa* was present at levels as high as 1,000 times what the World Health Organization considers a moderate health risk. "People were water skiing at the time of the bloom and exposing themselves and their children to the toxin," said Corum.

Currently several state and federal agencies are considering regulatory actions to protect the public, but according to the Tribe bigger actions are necessary. According to Tripp, “The only way to solve this problem is by removing the dams. This is possible since the dams are currently being relicensed and they contribute little in the way of power generation or flood control.”

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Editor’s Note: For a complete list of awardees see:

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/9e50770d29adb32685257018004d06fd/f1f7254ccd34aa9c852571540060c78e!OpenDocument>