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To ECONEWS Editors,

Matt Mais' article "Blue Creek Returns to Yurok Tribe" contained so many misstatements of fact that corrections are necessary lest ECONEWS readers get a warped picture of the Klamath River and the condition of Blue Creek itself.

Mais begins by asserting that Blue Creek is "the most pristine place in the Klamath River Basin." According to the Merriam Webster on-line dictionary, "pristine" means "in perfect condition: completely clean, fresh, neat, etc.: not changed by people." If we accept that definition, Mais' Yurok employers will definitely take issue with his assertion. Karuk and Tolowa, as well as traditional Yuroks past and present have utilized Blue Creek and its high country not only as a source of salmon, acorns and other abundant foods and materials but also as a spiritual retreat, a place to prepare for ceremonies and to "cry for power" in vision quests. Like other areas used by the Yurok People, Blue Creek was self-consciously managed, including with fire.

Lower Blue Creek was transfered in the 1970s to Simpson Timber Company (now rebranded Green Diamond Resources) in exchange for lands in Redwood Creek that became part of Redwood National Park. The timber company built many miles of logging road and liquidated predominantly Douglas Fir Old Growth which had stood for centuries. As a result, millions of tons of fine sediment was delivered to lower Blue Creek impairing its water quality and damaging its fisheries. Some of that sediment can be seen in the photo of Blue Creek's mouth which accompanied Mais' article. It will take hundreds of years for Blue Creek to recover from Simpson's liquidation logging. It is those former Simpson holdings, purchased with funds from conservation trusts, which the tribe now wants to restore.

Perhaps Mais' most questionable claim is that Blue Creek is the only thermal refugia along the Lower Klamath and that "if it were not for Blue Creek few salmon would be left on the third largest fish producing river on the West Coast." Blue Creek is an outstanding watershed with the entire upper portion protected as part of the Siskiyou Wilderness. The watershed's remoteness and the upper portion's roadless wilderness condition do make Blue Creek, along with Clear Creek, Wooley Creek and New River, among a handful of outstanding waters remaining within the state of California. However, as several scientific studies including one by Mais' employer, the Yurok Tribe, confirm, many creek mouths up and down the Klamath provide cool water refugia in which Klamath River salmon and steelhead can and do find refuge from often lethally hot and nasty Klamath River water.

Adult salmon and steelhead migrating up the Klamath and Trinity Rivers use a number of these refugia to survive on the passage to natal spawning grounds. Many juvenile salmonids migrating to the ocean also survive the harsh and often lethal conditions they encounter in most of the Klamath River by utilizing multiple refugia for respite.

Matt Mais also claims that "the salmon-stressing water temps in August and September are a result of a warming effect caused by Klamath River Dams." While one can understand the

impulse to blame all the Klamath's ills on dams which the Yurok Tribe wants to see removed, this particular claim is not even close. Among numerous reports documenting water temperatures in the Klamath below Iron Gate Dam and in major tributaries, the Karuk Tribe's 2007 Water Quality Report confirms that water issuing from Iron Gate, the dam farthest downriver, is significantly less warm as compared to water entering the Klamath from the Shasta and Scott Rivers.

In 2006 and 2007 the maximum water temperature below Iron Gate Dam was 22.5 degrees Celsius. During that same July-August period, water entering from the Shasta River reached 27 degrees Celsius and Scott River delivered 25 degree Celsius water to the Klamath. Even the 22.5 degree water issuing from Iron Gate Dam is not caused solely by dams. That water gains a good portion of its heat because most farmers and ranchers in the Upper Klamath River Basin do not allow riparian vegetation to shade the Klamath River, its tributaries, irrigation canals or the numerous drains which carry polluted agricultural waste water to the Klamath River. As a result, Klamath River water is unhealthy for salmon before it reaches the first dam and reservoir. Dams and reservoirs do render the already poor water quality worse.



Unshaded and dewatered streams and unshaded irrigation canals in the Upper Klamath River Basin

The Mais article on Blue Creek is an example of a dominant organizational objective causing assumptions to made and facts to be ignored. There is no doubt that Yurok Tribal leaders want to restore Blue Creek. According to their Tribal Park Plan, they also want to build a fancy lodge near Blue Creek's mouth and ferry tourists there from the town of Klamath on jet boats. That is all well and good and I wish the Tribe, one of my former employers, great success. But the desire to restore and develop the Blue Creek property should not result in misrepresentation of important facts. The Yurok Tribe has an excellent fisheries department with senior biologists who know the Klamath's true facts as well as anyone. Maybe next time he writes about Blue Creek or the Klamath Mr. Mais will use those biologists as fact checkers.

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Felice Pace has lived in the Klamath River Basin since 1976. He has been active on Klamath River and salmon issues since 1986. Felice lived for many years in the Scott River sub-basin. He now lives at Klamath Glen, five river miles from the Pacific Ocean, on the Yurok Reservation.