

WATER DEMOCRACY IN CALIFORNIA

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WINNEMEM WINTU HOMELAND THREATENED A SECOND TIME

"We cannot survive the flooding of our people a second time." —Caleen Sisk-Franco, Tribal Spiritual Leader and Principle Chief

The Winnemem Wintu have faced many challenges as the McCloud River's caretakers. In 1945, after the Shasta Dam, the nation's second largest and tallest, was completed and the Shasta Lake Reservoir created, 20 miles of the river's shores were flooded. As a result, 90% of the Winnemem's ancestral territory on the lower McCloud River and many sacred and cultural sites were permanently covered with water.

The Winnemem Wintu again face the same threat. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (the Bureau) proposes to add between 6 and 200 feet of concrete to raise the dam. Even 6 feet would flood many of the Winnemem's remaining sacred sites vital for celebrating and preserving their culture. Places such as Puberty Rock, where the Tribe holds their Coming-of-Age ceremonies would be covered forever.

The Winnemem have been forced to sacrifice their cultural heritage and homeland for California's economic interests. Mt. Shasta's fresh water is exported from the "place of origin" for use in chemical-intensive Central Valley agriculture. Over two-thirds of the water that flows through the Central Valley Project, including Shasta Dam, is controlled by 10% of the agricultural corporations that pay extremely low water rates, subsidized by the taxpayer.

The Bureau claims enlargement is necessary to store and provide more water for agriculture. If Central Valley agribusiness only implemented basic conservation practices on just the low-value alfalfa crop, it would save over 5 times the amount of water an enlarged reservoir could hold! Instead of requiring smart conservation, the Bureau suggests taxpayers spend almost \$500 million on the Shasta Dam raise project.

CALIFORNIA SUPPORTS WINNEMEM WINTU TRIBAL RECOGNITION

In the 1980s, the Winnemem were mysteriously dropped from the list of federally recognized Tribes. In this catch-22 situation, if the Tribe is "not recognized" the Bureau of Reclamation is not obligated to negotiate with them over the dam raise and the potential cultural genocide from increased flooding. However, on



Waimen Sisk-Franco celebrates Balas Chonas, the traditional Coming-of-Age Ceremony, with her mother Caleen Sisk-Franco, Spiritual Leader and Tribal Chief in 2006

August 13, the Tribe drew a step closer to righting decades of wrongs. The State Senate passed Joint Resolution AJR 39, introduced by Assembly member Jared Huffman D-Marin, to support restoration of Federal recognition. This would force the Bureau to negotiate directly with the Tribe if Shasta Dam is raised and most importantly to restore much needed healthcare benefits, housing assistance and college scholarships.

To learn more, visit: www.winnememwintu.us/

Environmental Justice Coalition for Water, Oakland, CA www.ejcw.org

Alliance for Democracy, Western Office, Davis, CA

Defending Water in California Campaign www.defendingwaterincalifornia.org