Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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James A. Joseph, Under Secretary of the Interior, and Huey Johnson, California' Secretary for Resources, today announced creation of a five-member observer team to monitor enforcement of strict regulations the two departments imposed earlier this week on Klamath River salmon and steelhead fishing.

"Formation of the team responds to general concern that the regulations be rigorously and equitably enforced," said Joseph. "The group will be a neutral body which will work to reconcile the interests of all parties concerned with the Klamath River fishery."

In a joint action, the two departments closed the Klamath at midnight Sunday, August 27, to all fishing for fall chinook salmon and steelhead trout below the Highway 101 bridge and severely curtailed fishing above the bridge. The limited return of adult fish of both species prompted the closure to protect the fishery.

"The presence of the observer team on the Klamath at this time will allow for the best possible communication among decision makers, enforcement officials and other interested groups - Indian and non- Indian alike - and will minimize the possibility that differences will arise based on false information and rumor," said Johnson.

The observer team, which the Department of the Interior will fund, consists of: William Dougherty, representing Secretary Andrus; Taylor Miller, representing Secretary Johnson; Walter McCovey, jr., representing the Klamath Tribes; a person to be named representing the Klamath River Resort Owner' Association; and Ed Howden representing the Community Relations Service of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The team will work closely with enforcement officials of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the California Department of Fish and Game in reviewing overall enforcement strategies and actions.

The team will have the latest information regarding the status of the salmon run as well as current forecasts for the duration and size of the seasonal run. It will participate in all decisions regarding continuation of the fishing closure now in effect as well as any revisions to existing regulations.

Johnson and Joseph also announced the establishment of an information center to be jointly funded and staffed by state and federal personnel. The center will work closely with the observer team and will regularly report the most current information available on all aspects of regulations, enforcement actions and salmon resources.