



PO Box 34 · Forks of Salmon, CA · 96031

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September 13th, 2022

Representative Teresa Leger Fernández, Chair  
Subcommittee For Indigenous Peoples Of The United States  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Representative Jay Obernolte, Acting Ranking Member  
Subcommittee For Indigenous Peoples Of The United States  
House Natural Resources Committee  
1329 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

**Re: Legislative Hearing: H.R. 6032 - Katimiîn and Ameekyáaraam Sacred Lands Act**

Dear Chair Leger Fernández and Ranking Member Obernolte:

On behalf of the whitewater paddling community, American Whitewater writes to express our appreciation for holding a hearing on the Katimiîn and Ameekyáaraam Sacred Lands Act (H.R. 6032). This legislation would take certain Federal land located in Siskiyou County, California, and Humboldt County, California, into trust for the benefit of the Karuk Tribe. The Katimiîn and Ameekyáaraam land is located in the aboriginal territory of the Karuk Tribe and represents the center of the Karuk universe at the confluence of the Salmon River with the Klamath River. Restoring these unceded lands to the stewardship of the Karuk Tribe is a long overdue moral imperative.

***About American Whitewater***

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*Our mission is to protect and restore America's whitewater rivers  
and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely.*

American Whitewater is a national non-profit 501(c)(3) river conservation organization founded in 1954 with approximately 50,000 supporters, 6,500 dues-paying members, and 100 local-based affiliate clubs, representing whitewater enthusiasts across the nation. American Whitewater's mission is to protect and restore America's whitewater rivers and to enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. The organization is the primary advocate for the preservation and protection of whitewater rivers throughout the United States, and connects the interests of human-powered recreational river users with ecological and science-based data to achieve the goals within its mission. Our vision is that our nation's remaining wild and free-flowing rivers stay that way, our developed rivers are restored to function and flourish, that the public has access to rivers for recreation, and that river enthusiasts are active and effective river advocates. Our members live, work, and recreate in the Klamath River watershed and within the lands and waters included in this bill.

### **Congressional Hearing Examining Tribal Co-Management of Public Lands**

On March 3, 2022, the full House Natural Resources Committee held the first Congressional Hearing examining Tribal Co-Management of Public Lands. The hearing examined broad issues of Tribal land dispossession enacted by the U.S. government and the impact of that dispossession on federal land management practices. The Committee heard from a witness panel comprised of Indigenous voices who provided cultural, historical, and legal perspectives on the importance of tribal co-management. As a follow up to this oversight hearing, we appreciate that the Subcommittee For Indigenous Peoples has scheduled this hearing to act on legislative proposals that address issues raised. The Katimiin and Aameekyaaraam Sacred Lands Act is a legislative opportunity where the Subcommittee can immediately act to advance legislation demonstrating a commitment to address issues that were raised in the March hearing.

### ***Support for H.R. 6032 - Katimiin and Aameekyaaraam Sacred Lands Act***

American Whitewater strongly supports the Katimiin and Aameekyaaraam Sacred Lands Act (H.R. 6032), introduced by Representative Huffman. This legislation would transfer administrative jurisdiction of the Katimiin and Aameekyaaraam land, representing 1,031 acres, from the Secretary of Agriculture to the Secretary of Interior to be held in trust for the benefit of the Karuk Tribe to be used for traditional and customary uses. This would re-establish the Karuk Tribe as the stewards of these lands for Tribal ceremonies, education, and cultural uses and will ensure that Tribal ceremonies can be conducted without interruption or interference.

The Senate version of the legislation (S. 4439) includes a condition that the Chief of the Forest Service shall continue to manage the component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System that flows through the Katimiin and Aameekyaaraam lands and allow continued access by the Forest Service for the purpose of managing the Klamath and Salmon Wild and Scenic Rivers. The Senate legislation also includes a provision for the Secretary of Agriculture to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Karuk Tribe, to establish mutual goals for the protection and enhancement of the river values of the Wild and Scenic Klamath and Salmon Rivers. We support inclusion of these provisions in the House version of the bill for purposes of providing greater clarity on Congressional intent for Wild and Scenic Rivers Management as provided for by Section 2(e) of H.R. 6032.

The whitewater boating community enjoys recreational opportunities on both rivers that flow through lands included in this legislation. The Salmon River from Brannons Bar to the confluence with the Klamath River is known to boaters as the Lower Salmon,<sup>1</sup> and the run on the Klamath River from this point down to Dolans Bar near Orleans, California is known to boaters as the Ikes Run.<sup>2</sup> We understand and respect that when we pass through these sacred lands we come as visitors to a place of deep spiritual and cultural significance to the Karuk people and that the World Renewal Ceremonies that they hold here are central to their culture and identity. We have an interest in further educating our community on the importance of these sacred lands and support the Karuk Tribe in their efforts to ensure ceremonies can be conducted without interruption or interference. We welcome any opportunity to work directly with the Karuk Tribe to develop appropriate education and outreach materials for our community and the general public.

### ***Conclusion***

On behalf of the whitewater paddling community, thank you again for holding this hearing and the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation. We strongly support the Katimiin and Aameekyaaraam Sacred Lands Act (H.R. 6032). We urge you to move this bill through the Committee and to the House floor to re-establish the Karuk Tribe as the steward of their sacred lands.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> Salmon River, Brannons Bar to Klamath River, American Whitewater National Whitewater Inventory, <<https://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/view/river-detail/11392/main>>.

<sup>2</sup> Klamath River, Ishi Pishi Bridge to Dolans Bar (Ike's Run), American Whitewater National Whitewater Inventory, <<https://www.americanwhitewater.org/content/River/view/river-detail/235/main>>.

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