The Klamath River Basin: Moving from a Colonial Past Toward a Cooperative Future

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Abstract: With the removal of tribes from native lands, colonialism does Oregon’s history. Colonialism may be seen as a thing of the past, but with continuing climate change, there is an opportunity for history to repeat itself. Oregon’s colonial history is an extremely contentious one, and one that has in many cases been written out of history in order to repair Oregon’s tarnished past. Still, looking to the past is important in looking to the future: climate change is likely to have a significant impact on water resources in Southern Oregon, impacting agricultural regions and Oregon’s economy significantly. Through Oregon’s colonial history, non-Native peoples have largely controlled water rights and water claims. However, the Klamath people have been arguing their historic claims to the Klamath Basin and its resources. As resources become more scarce conflict between farmers and the Klamath tribes are likely to become more frequent. This research paper will examine historical as well as potential future water resource conflicts as well as tribally supported, but mutually beneficial solutions, to the looming threats. The Klamath people as well as the farmers in fishermen share the same landscapes in Southern Oregon. I respect to find significant evidence of past conflict and potential for future conflicts, as well as potential non-colonialist solutions to shifting water resources.

Geographic Context

Klamath River Basin

Timeline

First Indigenous People ~8000 B.C.
Peter Skene Ogden Enters Klamath 1826
First European Settlement 1843
Homestead Act Passes 1862
Hunting and fishing rights guaranteed 1864
Modoc War 1877
Irrigation Introduc...