

## Klamath Tribe member completes internship with Reclamation

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When an internship comes to a close, the intern has feelings of both accomplishment and excitement that come from knowing the job they set out to do was done to the best of their ability. Gaining real-world experience in today's economic climate is an opportunity that can make a huge difference between just "getting a job" or actually "beginning a career." This is what pushed Rachel Mitchell to work for the Bureau of Reclamation this past summer as an intern for the Klamath Basin Area Office (KBAO) through the Department of the Interior's Klamath Basin Tribal Youth Initiative. The Initiative provides employment opportunities for tribal youth through mentoring and internship programs that are created to support the career aspirations of young Native Americans like Rachel.

During summer 2012, Rachel, a member of the Klamath Tribes, took every opportunity offered to her to learn KBAO's ins and outs, and she learned something new every day. Rachel started her internship at KBAO's water quality lab. For several weeks, she learned how to work the equipment, input data, collect water quality parameters in the field, analyze data that she helped gather, and understand what the readings meant. The majority of her internship was spent working with KBAO's Fisheries Resources Branch where the study of endangered



**Darin Taylor, a member of the Yurok Tribe and KBAO fish biologist inserts a passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag as Rachel Mitchell, a member of the Klamath Tribe and summer intern at the KBAO records the PIT tag data to track the endangered suckers at Clear Lake in Northern Calif.**

sucker fish was the primary focus. Rachel spent several late-night shifts studying juvenile suckers captured at the Klamath Falls' A-Canal fish evaluation station, and she spent many hot summer days catching and tagging Lost River and shortnose suckers at Clear Lake. During her final weeks at Reclamation, Rachel worked outdoors with Darin Taylor, one of Reclamation's Fish Biologists, experiencing the joy of being a Lost-River-Shortnose-sucker-wrangler-PIT-tag-coder-and-Trammel-netting expert.

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

For Rachel, catching and tagging these fish means more than just another day at the lake. For her it continues her tribe's connection to the Lost River suckers and shortnose suckers, known as c'waam and qapdo to the Klamath Tribes. These fish were a primary food source for the Klamath and Modoc Indians throughout their history. Although they are no longer actively being fished due to a severe decline in population, each spring the Tribes hold a "Return of C'waam Ceremony" as they have for hundreds of years. The ceremony preserves the tradition of thanking the fish for their return to the Indian people and welcoming them back into the rivers.



**Darin Taylor, a member of the Yurok Tribe and KBAO fish biologist assists Rachel Mitchell, a member of the Klamath Tribe and summer intern at the KBAO with Trammel netting endangered suckers at Clear Lake in Northern Calif.**

Matching up young professionals with experienced Reclamation personnel is exactly what KBAO's Native American Coordinator, Charles Korson, had in mind when Rachel was selected from the Klamath Tribes College Intern Program through a grant provided by the Mid-Pacific Region's Native American Affairs Program: "Rachel was the type of student that we were looking for, as she fully immersed herself into this rotational position working successfully with KBAO's water quality and fisheries field crews," Charles stated. "We had such a great experience that we'll do whatever we can to repeat the college intern employment opportunity next summer," he added.

As Rachel punched in her last time card, she was fully aware of all the great things she is taking away from this experience, and they include more than just her newly learned skills: "Working for Reclamation this summer gave me aspiration to continue to learn more about the fish and the science we use to understand them, knowing that education will carry on the cultural and spiritual connection my tribe shares with the fish," said Rachel.

Now that Rachel has completed her internship at Reclamation, she heads back to school to begin her last year at Central Oregon Community College, where she is studying Forestry Technology. Her plans for next summer include another internship, and she would like to stay within the field of natural resources; her hopes are high that Reclamation will be able to bring her back for another summer. And after that? She will be making a very important decision: whether she wants to be an "Oregon Beaver" or an "Oregon Duck!"

Good luck, Rachel! We know you'll succeed at whatever you choose to do... or as whichever critter you decide to be!