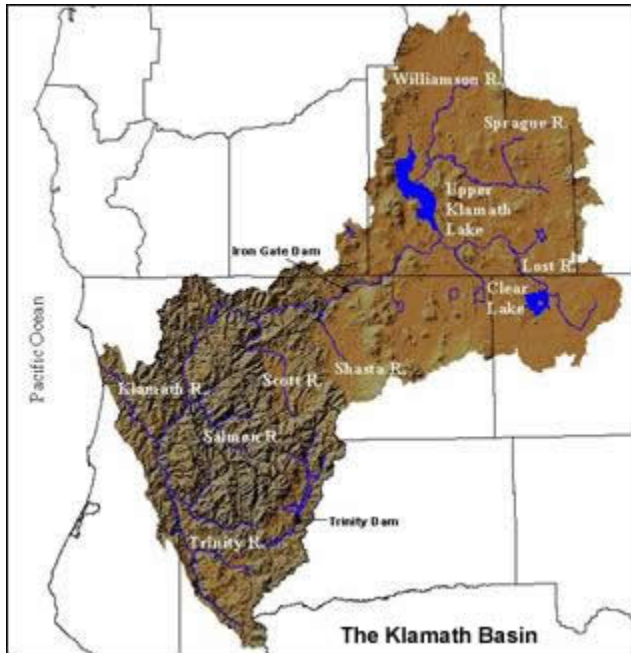


## The Importance of the Klamath River to Anadromous Fish



Source: <http://www.fws.gov/yreka/HydroImportance.html>

The Klamath River sustains an important fishery for both recreational and commercial fisherman, as well as Native American tribes. Historically, bountiful aquatic habitat made the Klamath River Basin the third largest salmon-producing watershed on the West coast of the United States, supporting large runs of fall-run and spring-run Chinook salmon, coho salmon, steelhead, sturgeon, eulachon, and Pacific lamprey.

The Klamath River is the second longest river in California. It drains an area of about 12,000 square miles while flowing more than 250 miles from Upper Klamath Lake in Oregon, to Requa, California. Its headwaters lie in a high-elevation basin containing wetlands, lakes, streams, forests, and

sagebrush and include the Williamson, Wood, and Sprague Rivers. From the upper basin, the Klamath Basin flows through rocky and forested canyons discharging to its estuary at the Pacific Ocean. Along the way, it is fed by the Shasta, Scott, Salmon, and Trinity Rivers, and many smaller streams.

"In 1850 in this river during the running season, salmon were so plentiful, according to the reports of the early settlers, that in fording the stream it was with difficulty that they could induce their horses to make the attempt, on account of the river being alive with the finny tribe".  
-R.D. Hume (Lane and Lane, 1981, p. 68)

Aquatic habitats in the Klamath River watershed once supported large numbers of anadromous fish, that is, fish that live their adult lives in the ocean but move into freshwater streams to reproduce or spawn. Klamath River salmon spend up to four years in the marine waters along California, Oregon, and Washington, and provide coastal and Klamath River communities with commercial and recreational fishing opportunities and fishing-based tourism. Anadromous fish on the Klamath include Chinook and coho salmon, eulachon, lamprey, steelhead, and sturgeon. The Basin is also home to a variety of resident native fishes of recreational and cultural importance, including several sucker species. These anadromous and resident fish species are trust resources of the local Native American Tribes and have sustained these Tribes for thousands of years.

Recent high mortality of salmon in the Klamath River from disease, including a major die-off in 2002 in the Lower Klamath River, has caused economic and cultural distress in the Tribes and communities that depend on river fisheries. In 2006, low projected numbers of Klamath River Chinook salmon necessitated substantial restrictions on commercial and recreational fisheries along the California and Oregon coasts, prompting calls for a Federal disaster declaration.