

Trip Report - Northern California Tribal Governments August 26-28

The purpose of this trip was to meet with tribal governments in Northern California. The trip was coordinated with Jacque Hostler from the Trinidad Rancheria and a member of the Humboldt County Tribal Transportation Commission. The commission is made up of tribal governments in Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

I met with representatives from the Karuk Tribe, Yurok Tribe, Hoopa Valley Tribe, Smith River Rancheria, and Trinidad Rancheria. The Karuk, Yurok, and Hoopa tribes are the three most populous tribes in the state of California.

Karuk Tribe – The Karuk Tribe has communities along State Highway 96 in Humboldt and Siskiyou counties. The Karuk tribe is one of 18 tribes that negotiated treaties with the US government that were not later ratified. This puts the tribe in a unique and challenging position as they do not have a reservation, but there are areas of tribal trust land and communities with tribal members.

The Karuk tribe is a self-governance tribe and carries out road maintenance activities and is planning construction of new roads in Orleans, Happy Camp, and Yreka. The tribe also has a GIS mapping system as part of the Karuk Land Department.

The Karuk tribe has a number of geotechnical issues as the terrain is mountainous and the roads wind through this terrain. There is a slide and drainage issue on Itroop Road that needs a geotechnical review. We discussed the possibility of Federal Lands Highway providing technical assistance for this. A follow-up with Federal Lands was done and they are willing to provide technical assistance to the tribes.



Pavement damage at slide area



Salmon River Road – one lane road

The tribe also has a proposed bicycle and pedestrian project and they are working with Caltrans on possible funding.



Proposed bicycle/pedestrian project area

Hoopa – At the Hoopa reservation I met with the Tribal Roads Director and the Tribal Planner. We visited a number of project sites on the Hoopa reservation. Due to the mountainous terrain and weather conditions, there are times during the year when there is very limited access for residents on the reservation.



Gravel road on Hoopa reservation

A number of projects that have been completed on the Hoopa reservation have been done with EFRO funds due to storm events and slides. The Hoopa tribe receives about \$500,000 from the Indian Reservation Roads Program. The tribe also has an Aggregate and Concrete Enterprise that generates funding for roads. The tribe also has compacted the maintenance function from BIA and has five permanent maintenance employees.

The tribe has recently completed a drainage project at a slide area. The project installed a multi-plate culvert and reestablished the roadway. This project was funded with a combination of EFRO and National Marine Fisheries funds.





Multi-plate and roadway at newly constructed project

The tribe has another completed EFRO project along the Trinity River in Hoopa. A severe storm event caused the river to change course and erode the bank and the roadway.





Newly constructed roadway and riprap along river

The tribe has an ongoing project at the Bald Hill Slide area on the reservation. The project is an ERFO project and will be a multiple year project. There are geotechnical and drainage issues at the site. The project is important for the transportation access but also to protect the river and fisheries environment.



Bald Hill Slide project

Yurok – At the Yurok reservation we met with the tribe’s planner. The Yurok reservation is 50 miles along the Klamath River and 2 miles on each side of the river. State Highway 169 runs through the reservation on the east side of the river from Weitchpec to Pecwan. State Highway 169 is a narrow and mostly 1 lane road along the Klamath River.



SR 169



SR 169



SR 169

Route 169 serves many tribal residents of the tribe and is the only route in and out of the area. The tribe has many safety and maintenance concerns along this route.

The tribe also has a bridge rehabilitation project underway. After the Minneapolis bridge collapse Caltrans inspected the bridge across the Klamath River and closed it for repairs. The bridge connects the east and west side of the reservation.



Bridge rehabilitation project

Smith River Rancheria – At the Smith River Rancheria I met with tribal council members and the transportation planner. Smith River is a small Rancheria along US Highway 101 near the Oregon border. Their primary concern is safety along US 101. They have been working with Caltrans and held a community design charrette for receiving comments about the corridor.

The tribe has developed a video that documents this process and is working with Caltrans on possible funding for safety and traffic calming measures.

Trinidad Rancheria – The Trinidad Rancheria is a small Rancheria along US 101 in Humboldt county.

The tribe is seeking funding for rehabilitation of the pier on the Rancheria. Funding for piers is an eligible cost item for IRR funds.



Pier at Trinidad Rancheria



Local Road on Trinidad Rancheria

Tribal Issues – There are a number of common issues from the tribes. Each tribe would like to see additional funding for the IRR program. They are concerned on how roadways will be added to the existing inventory and how that will impact them. There are also concerns about maintenance funding which comes through the BIA. There are also concerns about maintenance of the state routes that the tribes are dependent upon.

The tribes also are seeking technical assistance on the geotechnical and other issues that they have. Using FHWA FLH staff would be a benefit to the tribes.