

PRESS RELEASE

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Nez Perce Tribe Supports Simpson Leadership on Columbia Basin Initiative

Lapwai, ID – The Nez Perce Tribe will offer its strongest support for Congressman Mike Simpson’s newly-announced Columbia Basin Fund initiative. Restoring the lower Snake River and recovering salmon, steelhead, and lamprey has been the enduring vision of the Tribe for decades – a vision naturally arising from the geography of the Nez Perce homeland and treaty-reserved territory, and the place salmon, steelhead, and lamprey hold at the heart of Nez Perce culture. The Tribe has long supported restoring the lower Snake River by breaching its four dams and investing in affected local communities.

“We view restoring the lower Snake River – a living being to us, and one that is injured - as urgent and overdue. Congressman Simpson, in focusing on the facts and on a solution, speaks the truth - that restoring salmon and the lower Snake River can also reunite and strengthen regional communities and economies. We will support Congressman Simpson’s initiative and we respect the courage and vision he is showing the region. This is an opportunity for multiple regional interests to align with a better future for the Northwest: river restoration and salmon recovery; local and regional economic investment and infrastructure improvement; and long-term legal resolution and certainty,” stated Chairman Shannon F. Wheeler.

The Nez Perce Tribe, with Treaty-reserved rights and as a regional fisheries co-manager, is actively involved in all aspects of salmon recovery in all forums to rebuild natural runs to healthy, harvestable levels. The Tribe has actively participated in decades of federal litigation regarding the impacts of the mainstem Columbia and Snake River dams on fish. The Tribe’s vision and action have rested on what its people see as core truths: the status of salmon, steelhead, and lamprey is dire; the four concrete barriers on the lower Snake River have a devastating impact on fish and tribal people; restoring the lower Snake River to a natural river and reconnecting it to the near-pristine habitat of the Salmon and Clearwater basins is the key to rebuilding returns, along with ongoing hatchery and habitat actions; and as dire as the situation already is, the fish may have even less time, without action, given the looming impacts of climate warming.

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