

PRESS RELEASE

Contact: Kayeloni Scott
Telephone: 208.621.4772
Email: kayelonis@nezperce.org
Website: www.nezperce.org



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 28, 2021

Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Pass United Resolution Supporting Removal of Four Lower Snake River Dams

Tribes call on Biden Administration to secure funding & join Northwest Tribal Salmon Summit to hammer out bipartisan resolution of decades-long fight

Lapwai, Idaho— Growing Tribal unity around a proposal to remove the four Lower Snake River dams and strengthen and build Northwest communities by investing in energy, transportation, agriculture, technology, and other infrastructure projects got another huge boost when the 60 Tribal Nations of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) passed a resolution supporting the principles and funding of the Columbia River Initiative drafted by Representative Mike Simpson (R-ID).

“The Tribes of the Northwest have spoken with one voice, Mr. President. We must secure funding now, at this critical ecological juncture for salmon and orca, to implement the bold actions for salmon and river restoration that are needed including restoring the lower Snake River by breaching the four Lower Snake River dams, and investing in salmon restoration in the Northwest. The time to act is now,” said Nez Perce Tribe Chairman, Mr. Samuel Penney. “We call on you to join us this summer at our Northwest Tribal Salmon and Orca Summit that would put decades-long fights to rest, and build lasting solutions that will protect these sacred resources and build a stronger and better Northwest for all.”

The Biden Administration recently released its *Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful* report, which outlines principles and opportunities for protecting U.S. lands and freshwater resources over the next ten years. That report’s basic principles—honoring Tribal Treaty Rights, conserving U.S. rivers and streams, and allowing science to guide conservation decisions—as well as its recommendations, which include supporting Indigenous-led conservation efforts and looking for more ways to restore rivers by removing barriers, fully align with the requests in the ATNI resolution.

“We believe that the resolution passed today by all the ATNI tribes are squarely in line with President Biden’s recent *America the Beautiful* findings – we view that report as a blueprint for action,” said Chairman Penney. “There is no larger Indigenous-led conservation effort in the U.S. than the restoration of the Lower Snake River by breaching the four Lower Snake River

dams. President Biden, we look forward to working with you and your team to secure the funding necessary to implement the vision of a free-flowing Lower Snake River and a stronger Northwest, as put forward by Rep. Simpson. Then, we can sit down together to work on the implementation of these actions and how we restore our sacred fish, protect our orcas, and build a stronger and better future for all residents of the Northwest.”

During the same ATNI conference, leaders of the Native youth movement to protect and restore the Snake River released a letter calling on President Biden to support the restoration of the Lower Snake River by breaching the four Lower Snake River dams. Signed by several Northwest youth tribal members, the letter urged the President to take action before it is too late:

For our tribes, there is one way that you and your friends in Congress can help. Remove the lower dams on the Snake River and let our river flow free, our sacred river “*Naxiyam Wana*” (the Snake River). It’s the best way to make sure we have salmon and someday, our kids have salmon. In the Northwest, we are all salmon people and we must honor “*Wy-Kan-Ush-Mi Wa-Kish-Wit*” (the Spirit of the Salmon).

“We view restoring the Lower Snake River—a living being to us, and one that is currently injured—as urgent and overdue. These youth speak the truth; the time to act is now. Our past and our present have been harmed by these dams. Let today be the day when the unity of our voices ensures that our children, and their children and the generations that come after do not witness further degradation of the salmon. As Congressman Simpson has said, restoring salmon and the Lower Snake River can also reunite and strengthen regional communities and economies. This is indeed an opportunity for diverse regional and political interests to come together for a better and stronger 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 Mr. Shannon F. Wheeler, Nez Perce Tribe Vice-Chairman.

“The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians are united that now is the time to commit fully to the restoration of the Snake River, our salmon, and the culture of the salmon people of this land,” said Leonard Forsman, President of ATNI and Chairman of the Suquamish Tribe. “We call on President Biden to honor our treaties and to work with us to ensure the funding is acquired now to restore the Snake River and to help rebuild a stronger Northwest for all communities.”

###