Resolution #2023 – 14

“SUPPORTING AND THANKING ALL THE LEADERS WHO HAVE HEARD THE VOICES OF THE ATNI TRIBES, ESPECIALLY THE BIDEN-HARRIS ADMINISTRATION, SENATORS CANTWELL AND MURRAY, GOVERNOR INSLEE, CONGRESSMAN SIMPSON, FORMER OREGON GOVERNOR BROWN, AND CONGRESSMAN BLUMENAUER, FOR STEPS THEY ARE TAKING TOWARD SALMON AND RIVER RESTORATION IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, AND TOWARD LONG-IGNORED TRIBAL JUSTICE FOR OUR PEOPLES AND HOMELANDS”

PREAMBLE

We, the members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants rights secured under Indian Treaties, Executive Orders and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and constitution of the United States and several states, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) are representatives of and advocates for national, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives and tribes in the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Northern California, and Alaska; and

WHEREAS, the health, safety, welfare, education, economic and employment opportunity, and preservation of cultural and natural resources are primary goals and objectives of ATNI; and

WHEREAS, ATNI, through Resolution #2021-23 adopted at the 2021 ATNI Virtual Mid-Year Convention, emphasized real and imminent salmon and climate crises, and long-ignored tribal justice crises facing the Pacific Northwest, and called on the President of the United States (POTUS) and the 117th Congress to seize this historic opportunity and chart a stronger, better future for the Northwest and bring long-ignored tribal justice to our peoples and homelands, specifically “to ensure that funding is set
aside now at this critical ecological juncture for salmon and orca, to implement the bold actions for salmon and river restoration identified in the framework of Congressman Simpson’s Energy and Salmon legislative proposal, including restoring the lower Snake River by breaching the four lower Snake River dams” and “to ensure that the salmon restoration priorities of the Tribes of ATNI are prioritized and funded”; and

WHEREAS, after ATNI Resolution #2021-23, NCAI adopted resolution AK-21-009 amplifying ATNI Resolution #2021-23; and ATNI timely convened a Northwest Tribal Salmon and Orca Summit on July 7-8, 2021 to ensure the Tribes’ voices were heard by the Biden-Harris Administration and Congress; and

WHEREAS, ATNI through Resolution #2022-23 adopted at the 2022 Mid-Year Convention, “support[ing] and thank[ing] all the leaders who have heard the voices of the ATNI tribes and “call[ing] for continued support and action from the Biden-Harris and subsequent Administrations and the Congress”, and NCAI adopted resolution #ANC-22-022 amplifying ATNI Resolution #2022-23; and

WHEREAS, on March 28, 2022, the Biden-Harris Administration, following consultation with Basin Tribes, issued a White House Statement acknowledging it had heard the longstanding requests from Columbia Basin Tribes:

“We heard calls to support breaching the four dams on the lower Snake River to restore a more natural flow, also about the needs to replace the services provided by those dams”; and

“We heard a request to fully fund fish and wildlife restoration and to vest in Tribes and states a stronger role in managing those funds. Relatedly, we heard a consistent theme that the current fish mitigation funding is mismatched with the burdens experienced by Tribes: it is too little in light of the scale of the harms and the extent of restoration needed, and the locations and species benefitted are not in proportion to the impacts”; and

“We heard a request to support reintroduction of salmon in areas that historically yielded abundant populations, but are fully blocked by dams lacking fish passage: the Upper Columbia and Upper Snake”; and

“We were asked to consider the Basin holistically because of its inherent interconnectedness;” and

WHEREAS, the Administration on August 4, 2022, filed “United States Commitments” in the Oregon Federal District Court hydro-system litigation, with the Guiding Principles that:

“The Biden Administration is committed to supporting development of a durable long-term strategy to restore salmon and other native fish populations to healthy and abundant levels, honoring Federal commitments to Tribal Nations, delivering affordable and reliable clean power, and meeting the many resilience needs of stakeholders across the region. The Administration recognizes that business as usual will not achieve the goals of restoring salmon populations and ecosystem functions;” and

WHEREAS, the August 4, 2022 United States Commitments – which embrace the Tribes’ requests during consultation – and the March 28, 2022 White House Statement have served as the basis
for a further stay of the longstanding litigation over the impacts of the federal dams on the mainstem Columbia and lower Snake River through August 31, 2023; and

WHEREAS, on September 30, 2022, NOAA Fisheries – together with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and after providing an opportunity for input from the Basin’s sovereign Tribal and state fishery managers – finalized its science report “Rebuilding Interior Basin Salmon and Steelhead”, which expressly confirmed that a “comprehensive suite [of] actions are needed to provide the highest likelihood of reversing near-term productivity declines and rebuilding towards healthy and harvestable runs in the face of climate change.” “[C]enterpiece actions are paramount for specific stocks. . . . For Snake River stocks, the centerpiece action is restoring the lower Snake River via dam breaching. . . . For upper Columbia River stocks, the centerpiece action is reintroducing fish into blocked areas. . . . For mid-Columbia stocks, in addition to improved passage through lower mainstem dams, it is important to improve water quality and quantity and passage survival in focused areas of low- to mid-elevation tributary habitats.”; and

WHEREAS, Basin Tribes and states have expressed serious concerns, and elevated these concerns to the Administration, that the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has continued “business as usual” in its allocation of surplus revenues and setting of rates, that is not responsive to the salmon extinction crisis and does not treat fish and wildlife equitably with energy; and

WHEREAS, on October 4-5, 2022, Secretary Granholm conducted a Nation-to-Nation roundtable with Tribes as part of a Tribal Energy Summit, where Basin tribal leaders expressed support for the United States’ consultation with the Basin Tribes on salmon, emphasized the urgency of avoiding extinction and restoring salmon, and expressed concerns with BPA’s “business as usual” despite the Administration’s vision and commitment; and

WHEREAS, Basin Tribes have met with the Office of Management and Budget to emphasize the need for a “whole of government approach” and the need for additional federal funding associated with replacing the services of the lower Snake River dams (and the opportunities presented in the Inflation Reduction Act and Climate Bill); making a significant new investment in the fish and wildlife program (and identifying tools and mechanisms available to the Administration); and addressing the backlog of fish and wildlife infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, on August 25, 2022, U.S. Senator Patty Murray and Governor Jay Inslee released the final “Lower Snake River Dams: Benefit Replacement Report” following engagement with Basin Tribes which builds on Congressman Mike Simpson’s Columbia Basin Initiative, which concludes that “the services provided by the LSRD could be replaced, or even improved upon, and where they cannot be replaced or improved, mitigation and compensation could be provided;” and

WHEREAS, in conjunction with the release of this Report, Senator Murray and Governor Inslee emphasized that “status quo is not a responsible option”; that

“[e]xtinction of salmon, orca, and other iconic species in the Pacific Northwest is categorically unacceptable”; that “[t]he science is clear that – specific to the Lower Snake River – breach of dams would provide the greatest benefit to the salmon”; that “the construction of the Lower Snake River Dams resulted in harms to Tribal sovereigns and violations of Tribal treaties…Not only did the original
construction of the Federal Columbia River Power System inflict real and lasting harm on sovereign Tribes, but these Tribes have not benefited equally from the establishment of the dams. Tribes continue to grapple with declining salmon runs that have long been foundational to their cultural identity and economic well-being”; and that the Report “makes clear that – with adequate investment and coordination – it is possible to replace most of the services and benefits provided by the Dams…and to mitigate the loss of others;” that “today, there are clean energy generating resources moving their way through regional processes that if built, will replace the generating capacity of these dams – severalfold, by some estimates,” and the energy provided by the Lower Snake River dams “constitutes only a small fraction of the new generating and transmission that our region must build;” and that Senator Murray and Governor Inslee are determined to seize the “unprecedented opportunity to reach solutions that serve everyone that relies on the dams, the river, and the salmon;” and

WHEREAS, Senator Murray and Governor Inslee also committed to advancing other tribal salmon priorities including “expanding salmon habitat and passage throughout the Columbia Basin and Puget Sound”; addressing “the backlog of smaller-scale restoration, hatchery and remediation work throughout the Basin”; and “Work[ing] with Tribes, co-managers, and impacted stakeholders to determine a plan to more efficiently and effectively distribute salmon funding. Specifically, this will include an effort to transition implementation of NWPCC’s Fish and Wildlife Program from BPA to state and tribal fisheries co-managers; and

WHEREAS, Governor Inslee emphasized that “The state and federal governments should implement a plan to replace the benefits of the Lower Snake River Dams to enable breaching to move forward”; and

WHEREAS, Senator Murray emphasized that “[w]e cannot under any circumstances allow the extinction of salmon to come to pass” and that “[j]ustice for the Tribes of the Pacific Northwest must be at the forefront of the environmental and economic agenda as we work toward salmon recovery—this will require an ongoing commitment and consistent consultation as regional investments are made”; and

WHEREAS, Governor Inslee’s proposed 2023-2025 Budget contains funding to analyze “new electricity generation, transmission, ancillary services, efficiency and storage sufficient to offset those presently provided by the lower Snake river dams”; to analyze “highway, road, and freight rail transportation needs and options to accommodate the movement of freight and goods that currently move by barge through the lower Snake River dams”; and for “Upper Columbia River [salmon] reintroduction”; and

WHEREAS, ATNI will be hosting a 2023 Pacific Northwest Tribal Energy Summit; and

WHEREAS, Columbia Basin Tribal leaders have continued to emphasize the critical necessity of preventing salmon extinction and restoring salmon throughout the Columbia Basin in meetings with President Biden and the Administration; in meetings with Governors; in meetings with Congress; and in meetings with the public and stakeholders; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI supports and thanks all the leaders who have heard the voices of the ATNI tribes, and especially thanks the Biden-Harris Administration, and Senator Patty Murray and Governor Jay Inslee, Congressman Mike Simpson, former Oregon Governor Kate Brown, Senator Cantwell, and Congressman Blumenauer, for their public acknowledgements, efforts
and current actions in moving the Northwest towards the bold actions that will be needed for salmon and river restoration in the Columbia Basin: to support salmon, steelhead, lamprey, and native fish, within their complete ecosystems – from the orca in the ocean and Puget Sound to the nutrients salmon supply to the furthest inland streams – and to support the Northwest Indian people who have lived with these species in mutual dependence since time immemorial; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that ATNI thanks all the leaders, especially Senators Cantwell and Murray, for securing significant investments in salmon recovery in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act and looks forward to working with the Biden-Harris Administration and Congress to build on these investments; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that ATNI Tribes call for continued support and action from the Biden-Harris and subsequent Administrations and Congress to ensure that the bold actions needed for salmon and river restoration in the Columbia Basin are taken; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that ATNI calls for a timely convening of a 2023 Tribal Salmon and Orca Summit, with invitations to Presidential Administration Officials, to Congressional Delegation Members, and to regional state leaders, to meet and take timely action with respect to the salmon and orca restoration priorities of the Tribes of ATNI; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that ATNI requests the Biden-Harris Administration to further and timely consult in 2023 on a Nation-to-Nation basis with the Columbia Basin Tribes on preventing extinction and rebuilding salmon throughout the Basin; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED,** that this resolution be forwarded to the National Congress of American Indians.

**CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2023 Winter Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, at Portland, Oregon, January 22-26, 2023 with a quorum present.

Leonard Forsman, President
Norma Jean Louie, Secretary