



2026 Annual Convention Snoqualmie, Washington

RESOLUTION # 2026 – 038

“ENSURING TRIBAL PRIORITIES AT UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE OFFICE (USDA) OF SEAFOOD”

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 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 the representatives and advocates for national, regional, and specific Tribal concerns; and

WHEREAS, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives and Indian Tribal governments 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, fishing, aquaculture, and mariculture are sacred and essential practices of Tribal Nations, sustaining Tribal communities since time immemorial; and the harvesting of fish

and seafood is central to the identity, traditions, governance systems, economic opportunity, and ceremonial life of countless Tribal members; and

WHEREAS, the United States has entered into hundreds of treaties with Tribal Nations, many of which expressly guarantee Tribal rights to fish in usual and accustomed places; these treaty-reserved fishing rights are the solemn obligations the federal government is bound to uphold; and

WHEREAS, Tribal Nations retain the inherent sovereign authority over their fisheries, aquaculture operations, and mariculture activities, and this sovereignty must be recognized in all federal seafood and fisheries policy, regulation, and program design; and

WHEREAS, Tribal fishers, Tribal aquaculture enterprises, and Tribal mariculture operations are integral, not peripheral, to the American seafood industry, and any national seafood strategy that fails to include Tribal producers from the outset is incomplete, legally insufficient, and inconsistent with the federal trust responsibility; and

WHEREAS, Tribal Nations include the full spectrum of seafood producers, from small fishing operations to medium-scale commercial enterprises and tribally chartered seafood business; and federal seafood policy must support the full range of Tribal and non-Tribal fishing operations, and not to be designed or implemented in ways that disproportionately advantage large-scale corporate operations at the expense of Tribal fishers; and

WHEREAS, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) conducts population assessments that directly inform overfishing determinations and catch limits in federal waters; these determinations have, in numerous cases, failed to account for the ongoing and accelerating decline of fish populations in many watersheds and coastal ecosystems; and these formula-driven determinations of surplus have, in practice, eroded fishing rights and subsistence fishing resources that many Tribal Nations and Alaska Native Villages hold by treaty and federal law; and continued reliance on outdated and inadequate surplus-calculation methodologies threatens the foundation of Tribal food security, treaty rights, and subsistence ways of life that the United States is legally obligated to protect; and

WHEREAS, many Tribal Nations and Alaska Native Villages depend on subsistence fishing as a critical and often irreplaceable source of nutrition and cultural sustenance, and any federal seafood strategy that does not explicitly prioritize Tribal subsistence fishing rights, especially in the context of declining fish populations, will fail in its obligations under federal Indian law and treaty commitments; and

WHEREAS, the federal government has a trust responsibility to Tribal Nations that applies to all agencies; and this trust responsibility requires proactive, meaningful, and government-to-government consultation with Tribal Nations before any federal action may affect Tribal fishing rights, territories, or resources; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established a new Office of Seafood whose primary role includes coordinating across USDA agencies to ensure

fishers are integrated into USDA programs and working alongside the U.S. Department of Commerce, the U.S. Department of the Interior, and other federal agencies to revitalize the American food seafood industry; and

WHEREAS, the President issued Executive Order 14276, Restoring American Seafood Competitiveness, which directs the Secretary of Commerce, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, to develop and implement an America First Seafood Strategy to promote production, marketing, sale, and export of the United States fishery and aquaculture products; strengthen domestic processing capacity; and accelerate education of American consumers about the health benefits of seafood and increase seafood purchases in nutrition programs; and

WHEREAS, the House of Representatives advanced a Farm Bill (H.R.7576) that codifies the Office of Seafood at USDA and expands access to Farm Service Agency loan products to fishers and fish processing facilities, recognizing the importance of integrating seafood producers into USDA programs and services; and

WHEREAS, the USDA maintains an Office of Tribal Relations whose purpose is to facilitate the agency's government-to-government relationship with Tribal Nations across all USDA program areas; any new USDA office, program, or policy related to seafood must engage with the Office of Tribal Relations as a core institutional partner to ensure Tribal equity and treaty compliance across all seafood-related activities; and

WHEREAS, NCAI and member Tribal Nations passed Resolution SEA-25-003 at the 2025 Annual Convention, Supporting Tribal Departments of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, affirming that food sovereignty is foundational to Tribal sovereignty and calling upon USDA and the U.S. Department of the Interior to support the creation, development, and expansion of Tribal Departments of Agriculture; and

WHEREAS, as Tribal Nations continue to establish, develop, and strengthen Tribal Departments of Agriculture, including Tribal departments and programs that address fisheries, aquaculture, mariculture, and seafood, it is imperative that the USDA Office of Seafood recognize and engage these Tribal institutions as sovereign agricultural authorities, coordinate with them as it would coordinate with state counterparts, and direct resources and technical assistance to support their development and capacity; and

WHEREAS, the USDA Office of Seafood is a newly established entity operating at a formative stage, and decisions made now about its structure, priorities, and consultation processes, and program design will set the direction for years to come; it is far more effective for Tribes to be engaged at the beginning of this process rather than retroactively, after programs have been designed without Tribal input, resources have been allocated without Tribal participation, and policies have been implemented without meaningful consultation; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that ATNI calls upon the USDA Office of Seafood to immediately initiate government-to-government consultation with Tribal Nations to ensure that Tribal priorities, treaty rights, and sovereign interests are incorporated from the earliest

stages of the USDA Office of Seafood’s development, and all related USDA seafood and aquaculture programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI urges the USDA Office of Seafood to partner with the USDA Office of Tribal Relations as a core institutional mechanism for ensuring Tribal equity across all seafood-related USDA programs, funding opportunities, and policy development processes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI calls upon the USDA Office of Seafood, in coordination with NOAA, to support meaningful Tribal participation in fisheries data collection, assessments, and harvest calculation processes, and to ensure that Tribal ecological knowledge and Tribal-specific fisheries data are incorporated into federal decision-making in ways that protect Tribal treaty-reserved and/or other reserved fishing rights from the continued erosion caused by declining fish populations; and calls upon other State Legislatures to similarly adopt legislation to clearly and expressly exempt Indian general welfare benefits from any income calculation for purposes of SNAP benefits; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI urges the USDA Office of Seafood to ensure that federal seafood programs and funding are designed to equitably serve the full spectrum of fishing operations, including Tribal fishers and small to medium-sized commercial operations, and that program design does not disproportionately concentrate resources and market advantage in large operations at the expense of Tribal fishers; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI urges the US Federal Government to honor and uphold treaty-reserved and/or other reserved fishing rights in all aspects of any associated regulations, executive actions, and/or program guidelines; and

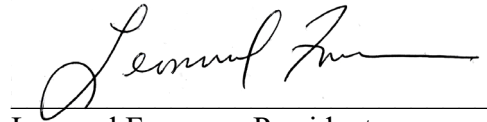
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI urges the USDA Office of Seafood to support Tribal Nations in exercising their sovereign regulatory authority over fisheries and seafood activities within their territories, including Tribal governments with their own Tribal codes, regulations, and policies related to fisheries and aquaculture that reflect cultural and economic priorities of each Tribal Nation; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that ATNI encourages the USDA Office of Seafood to recognize fishing, aquaculture, mariculture, as not only commercial activities, but also as integral expression of Tribal cultural identity and food sovereignty; and

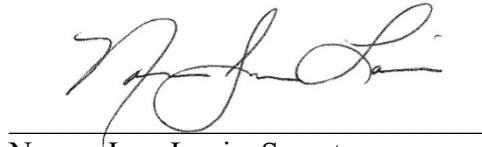
BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this will be the policy of ATNI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution(s).

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing Resolution was adopted at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians 2026 Annual Convention held at the Snoqualmie Casino and Hotel in Snoqualmie, Washington, on September 13-17, 2026, with a quorum present.



Leonard Forsman, President



Norma Jean Louie, Secretary