



YAKAMA NATION RESPONDS TO FINAL MURRAY – INSLEE SALMON REPORT

Tribe applauds Murray and Inslee for championing a comprehensive approach to Columbia Basin salmon recovery and looks for immediate action and implementation on key commitments.

YAKAMA RESERVATION, TOPPENISH, WA – The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (“Yakama Nation”) recognize Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and Governor Jay Inslee (D-WA) for today’s release of their final report regarding the critical condition of salmon in the Pacific Northwest and the feasibility of breaching the Lower Snake River Dams and replacing their current benefits in order to improve salmon and steelhead survival.

“Sen. Murray and Gov. Inslee have seen that the salmon, steelhead, and other anadromous fish of the Columbia Basin are in serious trouble. We appreciate their recognition that the status quo is not a responsible option if we want to avoid species extinction and continued decline,” said Chairman Delano Saluskin of the Yakama Tribal Council. “Yakama Nation agrees with the report’s conclusions that a comprehensive and aggressive basin-wide approach to salmon recovery is critical, and that Lower Snake River dam removal is a feasible option to aid the recovery of Snake River populations, which would in turn help remove restrictions on main-stem Columbia River fisheries.”

Yakama Nation understands that affordable, reliable, and environmentally responsible power and transportation options are critical to all communities in the Pacific Northwest – both tribal and non-tribal. But Yakama Nation also supports breaching the Lower Snake River dams, because we understand that the Pacific Northwest will not see a fully restored Columbia Basin fishery while those dams are in place.

“Healthy, harvestable Columbia Basin salmon runs benefit the cultural, natural, and economic vitality of all communities in the Pacific Northwest – rural and urban, Democrat and Republican, tribal and non-tribal,” said Yakama Fish & Wildlife Committee Chairman Jeremy Takala. “We cannot allow salmon recovery to become a dysfunctional, partisan political issue if we want our children and our grandchildren to have fish. In the Yakima River Basin, with the leadership of Senators Cantwell and Murray, Congressman Newhouse, and the State Department of Ecology as supported by Governor Inslee, we have been able to bring together tribal, agricultural, and other community stakeholders to develop an integrated and bi-partisan plan to address both salmon recovery and other community goals. We did so among parties who at one point had strong disagreements. This is what we must do now across the Columbia River Basin.”

Recommendations issued by Sen. Murray and Gov. Inslee include commitments that support key issues championed by Yakama Nation as critical elements of a comprehensive Columbia Basin salmon solution:

- Completing roughly one billion dollars in backlogged projects already identified as necessary or regionally recommended;
- Transitioning the Bonneville Power Administration out of the fish and wildlife mitigation business and instead putting expert tribal and state fisheries co-managers in charge of restoration work;
- Providing significant increased resources for mitigation actions necessary to ensure fish population health in the face of increased environmental pressures;

- Ensuring that new energy and transportation infrastructure projects are developed in a manner that respects tribal sovereignty, protects tribal treaty rights, and affords economic opportunities to tribal communities; and
- Putting dam removal on the table as soon as practicable.

“Yakama Nation looks forward to working closely with Sen. Murray and Gov. Inslee as they implement their commitments and develop proposals to support immediate and significant actions to save our salmon,” Chairman Saluskin stated. “Words are good, but action is what is necessary. We will be watching closely to see if these commitments are honored and fulfilled in a timely manner.”

“As Sen. Murray and Gov. Inslee have recognized, the construction of the federal hydro system in the Columbia Basin resulted in disproportionate harm to tribal communities, while failing to provide us with equal benefits,” said Councilman Takala. “Replacement energy and transportation projects implemented to facilitate dam breaching must have tribal agreement and should not be done at the expense of tribal rights like the hydro system was. Instead, tribes must have a leadership role at the table so we can avoid repeating past mistakes and instead use these opportunities to benefit impacted tribal communities.”

For additional information, contact Yakama Nation Executive Secretary Gerald Lewis at (509) 865-5121.