

RESOLUTION ON RECOVERY OF ENDANGERED SALMON, STEELHEAD AND ORCAS and REMOVAL OF THE SNAKE RIVER DAMS

WHEREAS, it is the position of the WA Democratic Party to protect wild salmon and all other native marine life; and

WHEREAS, thirteen stocks of Columbia/Snake River salmon and steelhead are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, including Snake River sockeye, steelhead and spring, summer and fall chinook; and

WHEREAS, The population of Southern Resident orcas, designated as an endangered species in 2005, has declined from 98 individuals in 1995 to just 74 today, with lack of their primary food source of chinook salmon being a central cause of the decline; and

WHEREAS studies by the EPA indicate dam removal and the restoration of free flowing water in the Snake River will decrease water temperatures and improve salmonid survival rates, and in 2018 more than 30 salmon biologists informed Washington State Governor Jay Inslee and the Southern Resident Killer Whale Task Force that one of the key measures necessary to increase Chinook abundance from the Columbia/Snake system is to permanently restore the Snake River by removing the lower four Snake River dams (LSRD); and

WHEREAS, WA State Democrats acknowledge that Tribal Nation's languages, histories and cultures are an integral part of our national identity, wellness and heritage, and we believe in upholding the Treaties, Executive Orders and Agreements made between Tribal Nations and the Federal Government, secured specific rights and privileges to sustain the future of Tribal Nations; and

WHEREAS, Indian Tribes across the region and nationally have called on our elected leaders for urgent action to recover these iconic creatures, culturally central to Northwest Tribes;

WHEREAS, Senator Patty Murray and Governor Jay Inslee have announced their determination to develop, no later than July, 2022, a comprehensive plan to recover endangered Columbia/Snake River salmon and steelhead and salmon-dependent Southern Resident orcas; and

WHEREAS, The Biden Administration has agreed, as an alternative to litigation over the inadequate and illegal salmon recovery plan released in 2020 by the Trump Administration, to work with Northwest states, sovereigns and stakeholders to chart a more sustainable path in the Columbia River Basin; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the 10th Legislative District Democrats applaud the leadership of Senator Murray and Governor Inslee and recognize and honor the legal and moral claims of Northwest Tribes; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the 10th Legislative District Democrats affirm that breaching four dams on the lower Snake River and replacing the services the dams provide with investments in clean energy and in irrigation and transportation infrastructure must be the twin cornerstones of any lawful and effective recovery plan; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, That the 10th Legislative District Democrats urge Senator Maria Cantwell, Representative Rick Larsen and other Northwest leaders to work actively and urgently with Senator Murray, Governor Inslee, Northwest Tribes and other stakeholders to develop and implement a comprehensive solution that works for farmers and fishermen, for Tribes and utilities and for communities in the Columbia Basin and on Washington's coast.