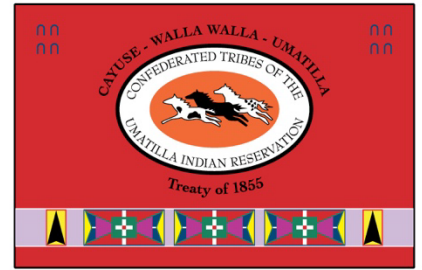


Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation



46411 Timine Way
Pendleton, OR 97801
541-276-3165 • CTUIR.org

PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Travis Snell • 541.429.7394 • travissnell@ctuir.org

Ceremonial Signing Celebrates Historic Columbia River Basin Agreement

WASHINGTON – Delegates representing the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) visited the White House on Feb. 23 for a ceremonial signing of the Columbia River Basin Agreement between the U.S. government and the Six Sovereigns.

This historic accord, which was announced Dec. 14, lays the groundwork for the federal government to work with the CTUIR, Nez Perce Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation and the states of Oregon and Washington to protect and restore salmon, steelhead and native fish to the Columbia River Basin (CRB).

Representing the CTUIR were Board of Trustees Member at Large Corinne Sams and Garrett Brown of the Office of Legal Counsel.

“My heart is big today. This is a historical moment for all of us, not just the tribes or the sovereigns, but the United States government and all Americans in the Pacific Northwest. We are Wykanish-Pum, the Salmon People, and in our creation story Salmon gave up himself so we can have nourishment. And in return, we promised to speak on behalf of our resources,” Sams said at the ceremony. “Since time immemorial, our people have relied on this fish population. In 1855 we signed a treaty with the United States government, and we secured the exclusive right to fish in our usual and accustomed areas in perpetuity. In the early days, our historic runs were over 20 million. Now its estimated run this year is 124,000. We are on the brink of extinction, and the status quo is unacceptable.... This work isn’t new. All we are doing is collaborating and partnering, which we should have been doing all along. So I thank the United States government. I thank all of you here today because it’s going to take all of us to implement and ensure we restore our salmon to healthy and abundant levels.”

Wild salmon, steelhead and other native CRB fish populations are essential to the economies, religions and cultures of tribal nations and Indigenous peoples. Due to the U.S. government’s construction and operation of federal dams, private dam building, population growth and other factors, wild salmon and steelhead species are severely depleted, harming the tribes that rely on them. Climate change is further imperiling fish populations via warming water temperatures, altered stream flows and other stressors. Since

the federal dams were constructed, 13 salmon and steelhead stocks have been listed as threatened or endangered.

Representing the U.S. government were Senior Advisor to the President John Podesta, Council on Environmental Quality Chair Brenda Mallory, Deputy Secretary of Interior Laura Daniel Davis, Deputy Secretary of Energy David Turk, Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere Dr. Richard Spinrad and other senior Biden-Harris administration officials.

The ceremony provided federal officials and Six Sovereigns representatives an opportunity to galvanize the partnership and uphold tribal treaty obligations in the CRB.

“The United States owes a trust responsibility to the CTUIR through its treaty relationship, and the CTUIR reserves the right to fish at usual and accustomed places throughout the Columbia River Basin,” CTUIR Chairman Gary I. Burke said. “This agreement aims to restore salmon and steelhead populations to healthy and abundant levels so the tribes may continue to exercise their right to fish as they have since time immemorial.”

The Six Sovereigns worked collaboratively to develop its Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative that addresses salmon, climate, energy and tribal justice crises facing the basin. The group welcomes the Biden-Harris administration’s commitments as an integral step in preventing salmon extinction and restoring their population to healthy and abundant levels while addressing the Federal Columbia River Power System’s hydroelectric facilities and creating a regional roadmap to meet growing electricity demand with clean energy resources.

As part of the agreement, the Biden-Harris administration commits to:

- **New Funding for Fish and Wildlife:** The Bonneville Power Administration, which is responsible for marketing hydropower under the Energy Department, will invest \$300 million over 10 years to restore native fish and their habitats in the CRB, with added measures to increase the autonomy of states and tribes to use these funds. Of this \$300 million, \$100 million will be provided to the Six Sovereigns for fish restoration projects, and \$200 million will be provided for hatchery modernization, upgrades and maintenance.
- **Tribally Sponsored Clean Energy:** The Energy Department is committing to developing at least one to three gigawatts of tribally sponsored clean energy projects to build energy infrastructure that, if Congress authorizes breach of the Lower Snake River Dams, could help replace power generated by those dams. These resources provide the region options should Congress consider dam breach while still meeting clean energy, energy reliability and other resilience imperatives.
- **Increased Flexibility:** The Biden-Harris administration is committing to adjusting federal hydro system operations to deliver a net-benefit for some fish, while maintaining grid reliability and upholding health and safety requirements. These adjustments will increase flexibility to deliver power during the summer when it is most needed. The agreement also provides 10 years of predictable operations for the region.
- **Studies of Dam Services:** The Biden-Harris administration will undertake or help fund studies of how the transportation, irrigation and recreation services provided by the four Lower Snake River dams could be replaced to inform Congress should it consider authorizing dam breach.

The agreement, when combined with other funding the Biden-Harris administration is expected to deliver to the region, will bring more than \$1 billion in federal investments to wild fish restoration in the CRB during the next decade and facilitate the build-out of at least one to three gigawatts of tribally sponsored clean energy production.

“This is only the beginning. In a sense, this agreement is really just a handshake – a set of solemn, mutual commitments – ones we worked very hard to create,” Podesta said. “But at the end of the day, it’s a handshake, nonetheless. It will take all of us committing to this partnership now and for years to come to lift the words off the page and bring this agreement to life. I want you know that President (Joe) Biden and Vice President (Kamala) Harris and the whole administration are committed to making that happen.”

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation comprised of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Tribes formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.

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Caption1: On Feb. 23 in Washington, D.C., Corinne Sams, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Member at Large and chair of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, signs an agreement between the Biden-Harris administration and the CTUIR, Nez Perce Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, Yakama Nation and states of Oregon and Washington. The agreement lays the groundwork for the federal government and the Six Sovereigns to protect and restore salmon, steelhead and native fish to the Columbia River Basin. CTUIR

Caption2: Corinne Sams, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Member at Large and chair of Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, speaks during a ceremony on Feb. 23 in Washington, D.C., to honor an agreement between the Biden-Harris administration and the CTUIR, Nez Perce Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, Yakama Nation and states of Oregon and Washington. The agreement lays the groundwork for the federal government and the Six Sovereigns to protect and restore salmon, steelhead and native fish to the Columbia River Basin. CTUIR

