For immediate release: September 28, 2016
Contact: Chuck Sams (541) 429-7393 or (541) 215-9666

The Ancient One Legislation Continues its March Through Congress
On Heels of Senate Passage, House Advances Bill to Return The Ancient One Home

Kennewick, WA – Today, the House of Representatives passed legislation that would return the Ancient One to local Indian Tribes. The amendment authored by U.S. Representatives Dan Newhouse (R-WA), Denny Heck (D-WA) and Greg Walden (R-OR) was adopted as part of the Water Resources Development Act (“WRDA”, H.R. 5303). The WRDA will now be finalized by a joint House and Senate conference committee.

“Thanks to the steadfast support of our Pacific Northwest Congressional Delegation, bringing The Ancient One home is finally in sight. We’re hopeful that it will not be long before we can lay him to rest with honor among our ancestors. We hope Congress will move swiftly to get this important bill to President Obama’s desk as soon as possible.” -- Armand Minthorn, Board of Trustee Member for the Umatilla Tribes.

“We are hopefully nearing the end of a twenty year saga to bring our ancestor home,” said CTUIR Cultural Resources Committee member Aaron Ashley. "But we need to stay vigilant and make sure this legislation continues down the right path. We’ve come too far to let it slip away when we’re so close.”

“20 years after the discovery of the Kennewick Man on the banks of the Columbia River, it is finally time to repatriate the human remains,” said Rep. Newhouse. "I am pleased that this bipartisan legislation transfers responsibility of the Kennewick Man from the federal government to Columbia Basin tribes where he belongs.”

Representative Denny Heck (D-WA) said: “For two decades, the Native peoples of the Columbia River Basin have strived to rebury their ancestor. The action taken by Congress today honors the rights and traditions of these Tribes and returns the Ancient One home.” Mr. Heck's floor statement can be viewed at https://youtu.be/uhPuygta_8E.

In 1996, the nearly nine thousand year old remains of the Ancient One, also known as the Kennewick Man, were unearthed. Since that time, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation have worked diligently to follow the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) process, but a lengthy legal battle ensued, costing taxpayers millions of dollars, and failed to grant the repatriation promised under NAGPRA.

In 2013, Dr. Eske Willerslev, Director of Centre of Excellence in GeoGenetics at the University of Copenhagen, and his team using new DNA techniques determined that the Ancient One is most closely connected by DNA to the Native people of the Columbia Plateau. However, he continues to be denied his right to a proper burial.

###