



Yakama Nation Applauds President Biden's Commitment to Columbia Basin Salmon Recovery

September 28, 2023. YAKAMA RESERVATION, TOPPENISH, WA – The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (“Yakama Nation”) applauds President Biden for issuing a landmark [Presidential Memorandum](#) directing federal agencies to focus on the restoration of salmon and other native fisheries in the Columbia River Basin, and affirming his Administration’s commitment to honoring the U.S. government’s treaty and trust obligations to the Yakama Nation and other Columbia Basin tribes.

When the Yakama Nation signed its Treaty in 1855, it reserved fishing rights to a run of around 16 million fish. Today, the region is lucky to see 2 million fish coming back to the Columbia Basin. The United States operates and permits Columbia Basin dams that remove, at the very least, 5 million fish each year. But instead of prioritizing mitigation sufficient to offset these impacts, Yakama Nation has seen the federal government provide flat funding in the face of inflation, defer maintenance year after year letting critical fisheries infrastructure crumble, and fail to make policy and budget decisions in a way that puts the needs of the fish on par with the needs of energy and industry in the region.

“Today marks a historic step towards achieving a new vision for the restoration of our Columbia River salmon runs,” said Yakama Nation Chairman Gerald Lewis. “We applaud the Biden Administration’s recognition that a collaborative path exists to achieve salmon restoration and a durable energy future throughout the Columbia River Basin for all governments and stakeholders.”

Under Biden’s Presidential Memorandum, all relevant federal agencies – including the Interior Department, Bonneville Power Administration, Army Corps of Engineers, National Marine Fisheries Service and others – will have 120 days to review their programs and assess how they could better use their existing authorities to advance Columbia Basin fisheries restoration. If their programs or policies conflict with the President’s stated goal of restoring healthy and abundant fisheries, the agencies must reform them to advance this goal.

Similarly, federal agencies will have 220 days to work with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to develop a comprehensive list of federal programs that could advance Columbia Basin salmon restoration, and to advise OMB on the resources those programs would need to advance this policy objective.

Finally, the Presidential Memorandum establishes the Administration’s intention to enter intergovernmental partnership agreements with regional tribes and states to advance Columbia Basin restoration and resilience – an approach consistent with the President’s commitment to supporting Tribally-led conservation efforts and to addressing historic injustices experienced by tribal communities, including the decline or elimination of Columbia Basin salmon runs.

“Our Columbia Basin salmon are in crisis,” stated Yakama Tribal Council Fish & Wildlife Committee Chair, Jeremy Takala. “Without significant change, our native fisheries will disappear forever; and extinction is not an option that the Yakama Nation will accept. At the same time, our communities are facing significant new challenges from climate change, aging infrastructure, and increased clean energy needs. We are pleased that President Biden made this public commitment to Columbia Basin restoration, and we look forward to working with the Administration and with our neighbors to advance the urgent actions we need to save our salmon while also ensuring that our communities will be resilient for generations to come.”

For more information, contact Yakama Nation Public Information Officer Star Diavolikis at (509) 830-6698 or view the Yakama Nation Fisheries website at yakamafish-nsn.gov.