

# Coming Together

## Sharing 50 Tribes' Vision for the Future of Pacific Northwest Salmon

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### ABSTRACT

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Salmon are central to the culture of Indigenous people in the Pacific Northwest. Research indicates that a diet that includes fresh salmon protects from health problems such as diabetes and heart disease, lower poverty rates, and lower mortality rates for Tribal members (Meyer 1999). In addition to these health benefits, salmon provide economic benefits to Tribal communities, including fishing-related jobs and trading opportunities (UCUT 2015). Pacific Northwest Salmon species are struggling for survival as their populations decline. A lack of salmon can be a detriment to health, the economy, social exchanges, the unity of communities, and traditional knowledge and skills handed down through generations. Deep cultural and spiritual connections with salmon are why many Tribes in the Northwest refer to themselves as “Salmon People.”

This article describes this collaboration, explores the history of salmon recovery in the region, discusses the cultural importance of salmon, examines salmon recovery projects underway in the region, and details how United States-based Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) supports and enhances these projects with its Resolution 2022-25.

During the annual session of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, member tribes agreed to collaborate on ATNI Resolution 2022-25 stating a shared vision and principles for salmon recovery in the Pacific Northwest. The resolution calls for strategic, collaborative, and coordinated mobilization for Tribal and federal action to address salmon recovery. The history of salmon recovery in the region is discussed to better understand this collaboration's significance and the opportunities it presents. Regional salmon recovery projects undertaken by Inter-Tribal Organizations are detailed to show how ATNI Resolution 2022-25 can support and enhance the projects.

**Keywords:** Salmon, Salmon Recovery, Tribal Collaboration, Tribal Sovereignty

The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Tribes<sup>1</sup> and salmon are intimately connected at locations such as Kettle and Celilo Falls, where Tribes historically visited to harvest fish and participate in a trade economy (CRITFC, 2022). Connections with places and ceremonies involved with salmon during harvest seasons have been affected due to phenological factors. Due to the low populations of salmon, Tribes such as the Coeur d'Alene Tribe are now restricted from getting their salmon from truck deliveries (Barker, 2022). These restrictions are an example of how the ability of Tribes to harvest salmon and continue their traditions and customs has been negatively impacted. Such controls are most recently due to the dwindling populations of salmon. This lack of traditional salmon harvests and connection to place affects the health, safety, welfare, education, religion, economic opportunity, way of life, and preservation of cultural and natural resources (ATNI, 2022). Salmon are tightly bound to the identity of Tribes in the Columbia Basin and Northwest, making the spiritual loss of salmon particularly important.

While the issues plaguing salmon differ depending on local conditions, the Indian Tribes in the Pacific Northwest of the United States are united in their commitment to protecting salmon. Tribes continually work on salmon recovery efforts, but the basin-scale collaboration is a powerful approach being adopted. Unity is the best strategy to demonstrate the importance of salmon and show that salmon extinction is unacceptable. Tribes and Tribal organizations are not going away, neither is their interest and commitment to salmon. Additionally, Tribes will

continue to fight for their Tribal rights that are tied to fishing and cultural resources.

To demonstrate this unity and commitment to state and federal decision-makers, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians collaborated on a paper stating a universal commitment to salmon recovery. Tribal organizations such as Upper River Snake Tribes, Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT), Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Commission (CRITFC), and Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) were involved in this process. The document was intended to illuminate a region-wide initiative surrounding the recovery of salmon while making room for Tribes to specify and pursue their unique interests and projects. This decision was made at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians' Mid-Year Convention, where a breakout session met on the early stages of salmon recovery. This group later grew in size for a large-scale collaboration effort. The document was titled "We are all Salmon People, ATNI Salmon Recovery Policy Statement: A Vision and Guiding Principles to Protect and Restore Pacific Northwest Natural Resource and First Food." The document will be referred to as the salmon principles document, or the salmon people document in this article.

The first step in drafting the "common interests" paper was gathering information about projects and written statements published by involved parties. These statements summarized

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<sup>1</sup> An intertribal organization with fifty tribal government members located in the states of Idaho, Oregon, Northern California, Southeast Alaska, and Western Montana.

the priorities and values of each party. Synthesizing and formalizing this information into something all members could agree with was the main goal of the collaboration. The goal was not to get in the way of the work Tribes were already conducting but to show unity and engage all involved Tribes in creating the document. The policy statement drafted would eventually be brought to Tribal leaders for their approval and input.

Due to their intimate connection with salmon, Tribes know that salmon need clean and cold water, rebuilt ecosystems, and steady flows (Powers 200). Group meetings with involved parties focused on many areas, including acknowledging that support is needed to achieve these conditions. This support can come in the form of direct funding, co-management, and genuine enforcement. The current system of funding solely through the states has proven ineffective in the face of the problems Tribes and salmon face (ATNI, 2022). It was decided that the document would be most helpful if provided to the federal government and congressional agencies to show unity for action across the region. If salmon recovery is to be effective, federal agencies and governments need to be willing and able to work together and be accountable. American Indian Nations are a vital part of the solution to rebuilding salmon and must be involved meaningfully. Tribes and Tribal Organizations have a role through co-management to fulfill their rights. Some federal agencies also have a role to play in this process. These agencies need to work together with American Indian Nations. Additionally,

accountability and monitoring must be built into the process to ensure the credibility of recovery work and the efficient use of resources. All of these themes were discussed thoroughly by group members and collaborators.

A working group completed a draft based on the discussion at large group meetings and existing publications by involved parties. Deliberations focused on creating unity by finding the correct balance between general statements and specific problems. Specific problems discussed ranged from the role of recreational effects on fish populations to policies surrounding predator control in the Northwest to the co-management opportunities available to Tribes. General statements show common ground but sometimes lack the authoritative power required for change. Specific statements can direct action but may leave out important aspects of recovery that apply across the Northwest region. At the final meeting, the group was able to balance these considerations and incorporate them into the draft. Again, Chairwoman Kathryn Brigham<sup>2</sup> emphasized the importance of unity on a country-wide scale and for the work Tribes conduct individually. Discussion flourished for several hours based on the interest of individual Tribes involved before the document was approved.

After the draft was at a stage of the agreement, the next step was to allow Tribal councils or other appropriate bodies in individual Tribes to review and comment on the draft. Based on these

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<sup>2</sup> Brigham serves as the AFNI Assistant Secretary. She represents the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation.

individual discussions, a session was held at the May 2022 ATNI Mid-Year Convention to advance the document or rework it to demonstrate better the common ground held by Tribes in the Pacific Northwest.

The draft was adapted into ATNI Resolution 2022-25 and passed unanimously by the natural resources committee and ATNI delegates at the ATNI Mid-Year Convention (ATNI, 2022). This action demonstrates the shared commitment to protecting salmon and Tribal rights that ATNI Tribes share. This commitment is not transactional, as salmon are an essential part of native cultures and are known as relatives.

This collaboration aims to show that salmon extinction is not an option. The unity of Tribes is powerful and can be used to acquire the resources not only for salmon recovery efforts but issues that relate to Tribal sovereignty and rights broadly.

### **ATNI resolution 2022-25 Historical Context and Significance**

This instance of collaboration and unity marks a significant historical achievement related to salmon recovery. Furthermore, it is documented clearly within ATNI Resolution 2022-25. The document covers critical themes such as the promotion of cultural welfare and values, sustainable harvest, climatic effects on salmon recovery, integration of best science practices and traditional knowledge, coordination of federal agencies to uphold legal responsibilities, inclusion for Tribes and non-native people, demonstration of everlasting commitment to salmon, and the

adoption of a holistic approach that results in sustainable and resilient habitats (ATNI, 2022). These areas seek to protect and preserve treaty rights, develop an understanding with federal partners, address the history of failed treaties, and show the importance of coordination. In this discussion, it is essential to note that ATNI Tribes have different histories, values, treaties, and agreements with the US government.

The resolution passed by the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians does not exist in a vacuum. There is a long history of salmon recovery by Northwestern Tribes, the Federal Government, and a combination of the two. One example of this history is the Columbia River Treaty.<sup>3</sup> The treaty was originally initially ratified by the US and Canadian governments in 1964 to decrease flood risks and increase hydropower generation. The standards set by the treaty led to blocked or inundated salmon habitats that prioritized economic development over Tribal values and well-being. Many Tribes and organizations are also interested in updating the Columbia River treaty to focus on reintroduction efforts into inaccessible historical habitats alongside fish passage facilities (UCUT, 2015). These changes would ideally be on a watershed level. ATNI Resolution 2022-25 recognizes and magnifies this call for passage and reintroduction in the Northwest.

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<sup>3</sup> The Columbia River Treaty was originally signed January 17, 1961, but due to <https://critfc.org/tribal-treaty-fishing-rights/policy-support/columbia-river-treaty/> The Treaty was not implemented until 1964 because of difficulties created by construction of the Canadian dams and marketing the electrical power owed to Canada.

Hydropower is a part of the history of salmon recovery. In 1934, the Grand Coulee Dam was proposed (UCUT 2015). The US government informed the Canadian government about the need for fish passage facilities such as fish ladders. Shortly after this communication, the Canadian government claimed that no Canadian interests would be negatively affected. Canada's claim was not the case, as there were numerous native fisheries located on the Canadian Columbia River. This statement was made without consultation with Canadian First Nations (UCUT, 2015). This lack of consultation is one example of how historical injustice affects the current conditions surrounding salmon recovery today.

From 1855 to 1856, many Columbia River Tribes signed treaties with the federal government. The US government received titles to over 60 million acres of land in the Northwest. In exchange, Tribes received 1.2 million dollars with the rights to natural resources, which are invaluable and incommensurable (CRITFC, 2014). The natural resources include salmon, which are closely tied to native cultures and ways of life. Specifics of the treaty included rights to fish harvests on all traditional grounds, rights to build for the purposes of curing on fishing grounds, rights to hunt and gather, and pasturing of horses on unclaimed lands. Courts have interpreted the meaning of this treaty to mean that treaty Tribes are guaranteed enough fish to provide a moderate living, are given a fair share of harvests, and participate as co-managers in decisions relating to salmon resources. The salmon principles document passed by ATNI calls for upholding these treaty rights for salmon.

A 1974 decision stated that the "fair share" of salmon harvest meant fifty percent of the harvest passed through Tribes' traditional fishing places. While this was the case, it also included language about how this percentage could drop if Tribal populations declined drastically or if Tribal fisheries were abandoned (CRITFC, 2014). Again, the document states that Tribes are unwilling to abandon their fisheries since salmon are "first foods" and are centered culturally. Northwest Tribes' interest in recovering salmon will never expire.

Later court rulings solidified Tribes as co-managers of salmon (Powers, 2000). The Yakama and Quinault Tribes were given the power to regulate and enforce treaty rights fishing on the condition that federal qualifications were met. Tribes organized regional organizations such as CRITFC and NWIFC to assist with legal, scientific, and technical expertise related to fisheries management to meet these qualifications. Without co-management arrangements, Tribal habitat restoration or salmon management is much more difficult. The difficulty is increased as Tribes do not have the means to veto federal and state actions that affect salmon in their habitats (Powers 2000). Salmon do not limit their migration to territorial boundaries, meaning that a plan that limits itself to specific areas has little chance of successful salmon recovery. The salmon principles document recognizes the importance of coordination beyond territories and agencies (ATNI, 2022). Coordination at the federal level is a major theme that will likely be strengthened by the unity ATNI Tribes are demonstrating.

There are many examples of disregard for native rights and lack of prior informed consent, coordination, and accommodation. While this is the case, Columbia Basin Tribes in the United States hold treaties, congressional agreements, executive orders, and the federal trust responsibility<sup>4</sup> to protect native people's cultural and natural resources. Court rulings have upheld protections to include rights to wildlife abundance, stream flows, preserved Tribal fisheries, and protected habitats (UCUT, 2015). One example includes Secretarial Order No. 3335,<sup>5</sup> which was established in 2014. This Order reaffirmed the Federal Trust Responsibility to Federally Recognized Tribes as the U.S. government's duty to protect treaty rights, executive order rights, and lands or resources held by Tribes (UCUT, 2015).

The United Nations General Assembly also has a "Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples"<sup>6</sup> that includes many clauses, including social, legal, political, and cultural rights of native peoples worldwide. Among these rights is the right to informed consent and participation in

any decision that would affect the traditional lands of native people. It is important to note that Tribes and First Nations were not given these considerations at the time of construction of dams such as the Grand Coulee Dam (UCUT, 2015). Recognizing ATNI resolution 2022-25 is a chance to acknowledge the Tribal role in salmon recovery that was historically excluded.

ATNI Tribes have a collective awareness that the current administration gives the opportunity to advance issues that have always been brought forward by native communities in the Northwest. This awareness translates to the common interest in applying pressure when the political pieces are aligned for action. The resolution was limited to two pages so that the intended audience would read it, even with limited time (ATNI, 2022).

Taking this document seriously and acting upon it is an opportunity for the current administration to recognize and reconcile past mistakes of the US government, uphold the federal trust responsibility, and protect Tribal rights. The salmon people document is

<sup>4</sup> The expression Trust Responsibility is used to describe the self-proclaimed obligations of the United States government under treaties, executive orders, and statutes to preserve, protect and guarantee the rights and lands of American Indian tribes based in interpretations of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. 1, 16 (1831). The expression "Trust Responsibility" was first used by the Supreme Court in the case of *Seminole Nation v. United States*, 316 U.S. 286, 296-97 (1942). <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ana/fact-sheet/american-indians-and-alaska-natives-trust-responsibility>). In this case, the Court stated that the United States "has charged itself with moral obligations of the highest responsibility and trust" toward Indian tribes. The source of this term is the United States Constitution, which recognized Indian tribes as distinct political entities, and the treaties, which established a fiduciary duty on the part of the United States to honor its commitments to Indian tribes.

The dispute between the Seminole Nation and the United States involved questions over the distribution of oil and gas royalties from tribal lands. The Seminole Nation argued that the United States had breached its fiduciary duty to the tribe by failing to properly manage and distribute the royalties. The United States, on the other hand, argued that it had no legal obligation to distribute the royalties.

The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Seminole Nation, stating that the United States had a fiduciary duty to manage and distribute the royalties in a manner that was in the best interests of the tribe. The Court noted that the United States had "charged itself with moral obligations of the highest responsibility and trust" toward Indian tribes and that this trust relationship was established by the United States Constitution and the treaties between the United States and Indian tribes.

<sup>5</sup> This Secretarial Order was signed by Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell on August 20, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations. (n.d.). United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>



a significant show of unity for many Tribes and should not be taken lightly. It is now in the hands of leaders to act on a basin-wide scale. In the meantime, salmon recovery on regional scales does not stop.

### **Salmon Recovery Project Spotlights**

It is important to remember that ATNI Resolution 2022-25 is broad and attempts to capture a common interest in salmon on a basin and regional level. The Columbia River Basin is so extensive that specific projects and focuses on salmon recovery may differ. For example, some regions may work on passage and passage technology, predator control, and hatchery production. Tribes and Tribal organizations are using the resolution as a demonstration of unity to acquire the resources needed to achieve goals related to these specific areas while spurring more extensive recovery efforts.

A review of Tribal salmon recovery projects that are currently being undertaken by the Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT), the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), Northwest Indian Fish Commission (NWIFC), the Upper Snake River Tribes (USRT), Coeur d'Alene, Spokane, and Colville Tribes illustrate good examples of the work the Salmon Principles Document advocates for on the regional level.

The first project is CRITFC's "Spirit of the Salmon Plan." This plan aims to restore historical salmon habitats and populations at all life stages. These goals will be achieved through strategies that promote natural production, healthy rivers, and the protection of Tribal rights. The plan identifies many current problems facing

salmon recovery, including overfishing, hatchery production, land use practices, hydropower operations, lack of passage, and artificial transportation (Powers, 2000). Some of these problems are detrimental, some are risky, and some are unproductive practices.

The "Spirit of the Salmon" plan and project take an adaptive management approach meaning that actions are taken to address a problem, results of the action are closely monitored, and the action or framing of the problem is changed based on the results. Adaptive management allows experimentation, learning, and action in the same process. This approach was adopted as failure to act was identified by CRITFC as one of the most significant contributing factors to the decline of salmon (Powers, 2000).

The plan begins with 11 hypotheses related to actions that can improve recovery efforts at all life stages. The hypotheses can fit into four categories: habitat restoration through land management, control of salmon harvests, improved migration through permanent reservoir drawdowns, and increased salmon production through supplementation. Habitat restoration includes considerations for water quality, quantity, and implementation of sub-basin plans. Controlling salmon harvests includes setting ocean harvest ceilings based on the abundance of populations in conjunction with habitat and passage efforts. Migration projects include operational changes at dams, including turbine efficiency changes, spillovers, permanent drawdowns, and the ceasing of artificial transportation for experimentation purposes. Lastly, artificial hatchery production and supplementation would

raise native stocks in hatchery environments designed to emulate natural conditions. This strategy would only be used under certain conditions. Severely depressed populations would be generally targeted for supplementation due to the difficulty of natural reproduction within these populations. Another case where supplementation could be utilized is when other recovery efforts will not produce results fast enough to avoid further harm to depressed stocks (Powers, 2000).

Over the last 20 years, CRITFC has been testing the hypotheses of the “Spirit of the Salmon” plan (CRITFC, 2014). Setting ocean harvest limits, operational changes at hydropower sites, and salmon reintroduction have resulted in increased runs, a more diverse harvest, and multi-seasonal harvests. Because of the adaptive approach of this plan, successes and failures can be learned to alter priorities. This approach allowed for a 2014 update that further described technical, institutional, and community guidelines used today (CRITFC, 2014). The strength of these projects and the overall plan emerges from addressing the entire ecosystem, proposing specific actions, allowing for management strategies to be adjusted, and inter-Tribal coordination.

Other salmon recovery projects include the “Fish Passage and Reintroduction into the US and Canadian Upper Columbia Basin” paper, a collaboration between CRITFC, USRT, UCUT, and other Tribal organizations (UCUT, 2015). This paper intends to inform federal and regional sovereigns in the US and Canada about effectively reintroducing salmon into the Upper Columbia Basin. The proposed plan addresses the passage

of adults and juveniles at Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams in the United States and Canadian dams such as Hugh Keenleyside, Brilliant, Waneta, and Seven Mile. The paper outlines an incremental reintroduction plan that includes pre-planning, research, and experimental pilot studies to inform future action, monitoring, and evaluation (UCUT, 2015). This process of experimental studies, monitoring, and evaluation is another form of adaptive management (CRITFC also applies). One example study includes research into fish behavior when passing around or through dams.

Long-term goals of the reintroduction plan include permanent passage technology at federal dams, habitat improvement, artificial propagation, and effective monitoring and evaluation. Recent successes in fish passage technology have shown the potential for increased work to be put on passage facilities and technology and restoring upstream habitat. If salmon can pass through blocked areas, increased habitat could result in a more significant salmon population (UCUT, 2015).

Considering this potential for increased populations, CRITFC, UCUT, and Canadian Tribal organizations have prioritized aspects of their project that should be addressed in the next three years. These include studying passage options for upstream and downstream migration in conjunction with experimental reintroduction above Columbia River dams. With the new understanding from experiments, effective adult and juvenile passage technology would be implemented at Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams specifically for fish passing Lake Roosevelt



and the Grand Coulee dam. Phase one of these plans includes pre-assessment planning and studies related to passage and reintroduction. Phase two entails experimental introductions alongside short-term passage facilities. Phase three begins construction on permanent passage facilities for adults and juveniles. Habitat restoration would occur in areas deemed as a priority during this phase. The plan's final phase is designed to meet the short-term goals of establishing monitoring, evaluation, and an adaptive management approach. Habitat restoration projects would be continued in this phase (UCUT, 2015).

Phase 1 of the fish passage and reintroduction plan has been completed. This phase assessed current conditions of survival rates through dams, and habitat availability identified potential donor stocks and associated risks, began life-cycle modeling, researched fish passage alternatives, and recommended future studies. The preliminary results of phase 1 were promising as they showed reintroduction and fish passage efforts could potentially achieve Tribal restoration goals. Habitat availability studies showed that there are thousands of miles of streams suitable to support millions of juveniles and tens of thousands of adults. Based on this information, phase two activities include:

- Designing reintroduction strategies,
- Researching alternative passage options,
- Identifying other essential studies to be conducted,
- Implementing reintroduction plans and monitoring and evaluating phase 2 activities.

Phase three will be planned based on the results of phase 2 (UCUT 2015).

The last project that will be covered is a collaboration between the Coeur d'Alene, Spokane, and Colville Tribes (Aadland, 2022). In this inland region, adult salmon must pass eight hydroelectric dams before they reach Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams (CRITFC, 2013). These dams are enormous hydropower operations that need more effective passage facilities. Ineffective passage means juveniles must travel through the dam's turbines to continue their migration (Barker, 2022). The following figure shows the current distribution of dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers:



Figure 1. Dams on the Columbia and Snake (CRITFC, 2013)

These conditions contribute to a lack of or significantly reduced salmon harvests for these Tribes. Despite this, these Tribes believe that salmon recovery is possible, even without the support of the Endangered Species Act. New passage technologies promise new recovery opportunities (Aadland, 2022).

These Tribes have started to study blocked habitats in their regions. Results from the project's first stage show the potential for tens of thousands of adult salmon to be produced from reintroduction into blocked habitat areas. These results allowed Phase 2 to begin, where around 5,000 salmon were released into Hangman Creek, Lake Roosevelt, and the Spokane River. PIT and Acoustic tags were used to track how adults and juveniles travel through blocked areas. This phase aims to test the feasibility of reintroduction in these areas before larger-scale action is taken. This testing allows the Tribes to get a complete picture of the salmon life-cycle model. This model can be used to make informed decisions in the future. The current plan is to continue to repeat Phase 2 until the feasibility of reintroduction is better understood (Aadland, 2022).

More recent tests released 750 juvenile summer chinook salmon into Chamokane Creek in 2017. These individuals had to pass through dams and reservoirs with abundant predators. Many reached the section of the Columbia River before the eight dams mentioned above. After the first dams, 90 (12%) individuals were detected. Farther downstream, 24 (3.2%) were detected passing the Bonneville Dam, and four (0.5%) were detected in the Columbia River estuary. In

the summer of 2019, only one strong, healthy adult female was detected returning upstream. Three more were documented as harvested in the ocean. Of the 750 individuals released, a return rate was about 0.4%. This is certainly alarming, but it is on par with other return rates for species such as steelhead. These rates demonstrate how unsustainable the status quo is for salmon. A later release of 1,400 chinook smolts by the Coeur d'Alene Tribe showed about 90 (6.4%) of those fish survived the downstream passage of all three Spokane River dams, as well as Grand Coulee, Chief Joseph, and the eight dams on the middle and lower Columbia River (Aadland, 2022).

If reintroduction is deemed feasible and successful, the project's focus will shift. The next step would be implementing passage technology for juveniles to get through and adults to get around dams. Floating surface collectors and whoosh cannons show potential for these projects. It is important to note that this reintroduction took place experimentally without accompanying projects such as habitat restoration (Aadland, 2022). This experimental approach is a good sign as these return rates will hopefully rise with the addition of other efforts in the area. It also shows a glimmer of hope for salmon recovery projects that do not include dam operational changes or breaching.

These three Tribal projects are among many currently underway in the Northwest. The salmon principles document passed as an ATNI resolution will aid in the funding and federal/state support of these projects. Additionally, it seeks to spur large-scale salmon recovery efforts.

In order to effectively facilitate the progress of individual salmon recovery projects that Tribes may undertake, a set of guidelines was proposed by participating Tribes. These guidelines would be provided to federal or state partners. While these guidelines are still being developed, important areas include Tribal sovereignty, co-management as opposed to stakeholder engagement, the government's trust obligations, the need for the state to Tribe partnerships, and the importance of education on Tribal history and values. Combining these guidelines and the passed resolution will help move the needle on salmon recovery across the region. Evidence of this possibility is due to the Tribes in the region coming together to support each other in their efforts to protect salmon and their culture.

### **Connecting Salmon Projects and ATNI Resolution 2022-25**

The goal of the ATNI document and resolution is to demonstrate the unity of the ATNI Tribes when it comes to protecting salmon, to convey the cultural importance of salmon, and to strengthen the projects that Tribes and Tribal organizations are fighting for (ATNI 2022). In this spirit, much of the language of the document advocates the principles that are realized in these individual projects. It speaks to the diverse ways in which salmon are struggling for survival which is seen in the many ways Tribes approach salmon recovery.

Each of these projects has the goal of protecting Tribal rights and sovereignty. The document explicitly advocates for preserving cultural and natural resources while promoting the welfare of native people. This advocacy is

at the national, regional, and Tribal levels. It is crucial that salmon recovery projects recognize, incorporate, and honor Tribal cultures not as red tape but as an essential part of the solution.

ATNI resolution 2022-25 discusses the many factors contributing to the decline of salmon species. Some examples include barriers and passage concerns such as culverts and hydropower operations. These concerns are addressed explicitly by all three projects discussed in this article. The resolution also highlights habitat destruction as a result of pollution, runoff, agricultural and forestry practices, and insufficient water treatment. While all three plans address this by advocating for habitat restoration, the "Spirit of the Salmon" and Reintroduction and Passage collaboration lay out specific plans on how to best restore habitats that can then be used to reintroduce and support salmon. Part of habitat protection is also protecting lands that traditionally produce first foods. The protection of lands is addressed by the Coeur d'Alene, Spokane, and Colville Tribes in recognizing places such as Celilo Falls (CRITFC, 2022).

Dwindling snowpacks and glaciers that raise water temperatures and more frequent or severe floods and droughts as effects of climate change are also featured in the document. All three projects recognize the impacts that climate change is having on salmon populations. When working to restore habitat, it is vital to understand how factors such as water temperature and flow will affect the quality of the habitat in the future and to plan accordingly. Part of the "Spirit of the Salmon" plan includes

prioritizing habitats that will remain ideal such as higher elevation areas for both restoration and reintroduction. Lastly, the resolution advocates for a sustainable harvest of salmon. Advocating sustainability is the reason why abundance-based harvests are strongly advocated for in many salmon restoration projects.

### Final thoughts

Salmon are interconnected with the ecosystem. They supply vital nutrients to inland streams and provide needed diets for species such as the orca. Tribes in the region have developed an intimate understanding of these ecosystems and the things that support their flourishing. That is why decision-makers must listen when over 50 Tribes come together to call for meaningful and practical strategies that result in bold actions.

The Tribes recognize that the work is past due, which ties to the adaptive management approach adopted by many Tribal salmon recovery projects. ATNI Resolution 2022-25 clarifies that salmon extinction is not an option that merits consideration.

Through this resolution and other efforts, Tribes have come together to state their shared vision and principles that are known to be important in protecting salmon. Action is being taken, but more resources and funding are needed to ensure that Salmon are a part of the Northwest in perpetuity. The Whitehouse has acknowledged the crisis of salmon recovery in the Pacific Northwest (NOAA, 2022). With this acknowledgment needs to come bold actions to ensure the future of Pacific Northwest Salmon.

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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Kieren Daley Laursen is a Chickasaw Tribal Citizen and works for the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians on policy-related issues. Currently residing in Fort Collins, Colorado, his passion for sustainability and stewardship has led him down a career path of environmental ethics and policy. In 2021, Kieren received a BA in Philosophy and Environmental Sustainability from Colorado State University.

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