TITLE: Calling upon the United States to Protect and Restore Tribal Resources Impacted Hazardous Waste Site

WHEREAS, we, the members of the National Congress of American Indians of the United States, invoking the divine blessing of the Creator upon our efforts and purposes, in order to preserve for ourselves and our descendants the inherent sovereign rights of our Indian nations, rights secured under Indian treaties and agreements with the United States, and all other rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the health, safety and welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution; and

WHEREAS, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments; and

WHEREAS, since time immemorial, indigenous people, have cared for and sustained our way of life, religion, and culture that we hold sacred, and we are obligated to take appropriate and necessary actions to care for our resources for the generations unborn; and

WHEREAS, tribal people have witness the desecration of our homelands; polluted by industry, oil spills, and nuclear production threatening our culture, our traditional way of life, and the health of our people; and

WHEREAS, federal statutory authorities provide the regulatory structure to protect and restore tribal resources impacted by the release of hazardous substances; and

WHEREAS, primary restoration actions undertaken to return an injured resource to baseline conditions is authorized by Congress, and integration of restoration into hazardous substance cleanup decisions is practicable and necessary to protect the natural resources which tribal citizens depend on; and

WHEREAS, cleanup decisions at hazardous waste sites are unacceptable, disproportionately impacting tribal citizens health and way of life; and

WHEREAS, tribal leaders recognize our sacred responsibility to the health, well-being, and survival of our people and how inadequate cleanups of contaminated sites will continue to adversely impact future generations; and
WHEREAS, the Yakama Nation has been a leader in Comprehensive Environmental Resources, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 clean up actions and Natural Resource Damage Assessment claims ensuring funding has been made available to pursue participation in cleanup activities and injury assessment at the Hanford site and other hazardous waste sites on ceded lands, recognizes this as an issue of regional and national concern for all tribes.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians urges the Federal government and States to clean up contaminated sites so that the disproportionate health risks to tribal people are eliminated; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI calls for primary restoration of contaminated sites to ensure the ecosystem is healthy and can provide the physical and spiritual nourishment to tribal citizens as it has in the past and for future generations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that NCAI urges that the United States government ensures that trust and treaty resources are available for gathering and use, without concern of risk to our health and wellbeing, as obligated by the trust and treaty responsibilities; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that this resolution shall be the policy of NCAI until it is withdrawn or modified by subsequent resolution.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted by the General Assembly at the 2016 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held at the Phoenix Convention Center, October 9th-14th 2016, with a quorum present.

Brian Cladoosby, President

ATTEST:

Aaron Payment, Recording Secretary