



NATIONAL CONGRESS OF AMERICAN INDIANS

The National Congress of American Indians Resolution #PDX-20-009

TITLE: Support for Tribal Subsistence and Commercial Fishery Disaster Declarations

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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 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 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, the harvest and utilization of natural resources are vital to our communities social and economic well-being and the survival of Alaska Native cultures; and

WHEREAS, subsistence fish along with other natural resources provide the basic food security for Alaska Natives who live in communities where cash income opportunities are limited; and

WHEREAS, the significance of Alaska Native subsistence hunting and fishing was recognized by Congress when it made a commitment to Alaska Natives by enacting Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) in 1980; and

WHEREAS, subsistence hunting and fishing became increasingly important to rural communities as a result of the impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic including irregular transportation to and from rural communities; the cessation of transportation during the closure of some communities; loss of cash-income opportunities; stable availability of commercial foods; and the increased costs of commercial foods; and

WHEREAS, the summer of 2020 is being characterized by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as one of the worst salmon seasons in decades; and

WHEREAS, several communities have requested the State of Alaska make a disaster declaration for the commercial salmon fisheries and have requested the State of Alaska seek a fisheries disaster declaration from the Secretary of Commerce, under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; and

WHEREAS, many tribal communities nationwide depend on subsistence fishing as their primary source of food as well as their cultural way of life to sustain themselves through the winter months; and

WHEREAS, tribal communities are reporting a disastrous 2020 subsistence fisheries season in part, because of fishing areas closures; and

WHEREAS, this has left some families without access to food and forced fisherman to travel further from their communities to find opportunities to fish, and to fish for longer hours; and

WHEREAS, tribal communities which have suffered the loss of wage income; irregular transportation to and from villages resulting in higher costs of commercial foods; and one of the worst subsistence fishing seasons are facing extraordinary hardships and loss of their food security; and

WHEREAS, substantial inequities exist between commercial and subsistence fisheries in that disaster funds have been made available for commercial fisheries, but not for subsistence fisheries.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) calls on the Secretary of Commerce, Congress, and relevant state governments and agencies to:

(1) Clarify that tribal subsistence fisheries are eligible recipients of fishery disaster relief funding under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act, and

(2) To ensure that any future COVID-19 fisheries assistance relief funds are expeditiously distributed to those tribal communities and families that have been suffering from decreasing salmon stocks for decades due to closures and which has been made worse as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

(3) Provide direct relief to tribal subsistence fisheries and to the commercial fisheries; 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 2020 Annual Session of the National Congress of American Indians, held Nov 8, 2020 - Nov 13, 2020, with a quorum present.



Fawn Sharp, President

ATTEST:



Juana Majel Dixon, Recording Secretary