

Saving the Salmon by Breaching the Four Lower Snake River Dams

WHEREAS: UU Principles call for us to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person; justice, equity and compassion in human relations; a goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all; and respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. UUA history has also called us to action on behalf of both the Indigenous communities and the environment.

WHEREAS: The recent Ninth Circuit decision in *United States v. Washington*, No. 13-35474 (9th Cir. 2016), held that both Washington State and the United States governments are liable to signatory tribes for blocking or impeding salmon migration in violation of the 1855 Stevens Treaties.

WHEREAS: The decline of salmon and steelhead populations in the Pacific Northwest is a well-documented and complex problem. Scientists have long recognized the influence of, among other factors, habitat loss, challenges posed by dams and reservoirs, timber harvests, farming, industrial facilities, and urbanization. Despite hard work, ingenuity, great expense, and commitment across all levels of Federal, state, Tribal and local governments and a wide range of stakeholders, many fish populations in the Columbia River Basin—salmon, steelhead, and others— have not recovered. Some continue to decline and NOAA Fisheries concludes that SRKW [Southern Resident Killer Whales (orcas)] continue to face a high risk of extinction and should remain on the endangered species list.

WHEREAS: Recognizing that the dams, particularly the lower Snake River dams, have had a significant adverse impact on the anadromous fish runs and their Treaty rights, Nimiipuu (Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho) passed a resolution to support breaching the dams, The Nez Perce Tribe resolution states it has relied upon the salmon resources of the Columbia River system since time immemorial and that the salmon have a vital and primary role in the cultural, religious, economic, and physical well-being of the Nez Perce people. They cited their exclusive right to take fish at all usual and accustomed places under the Treaty of June 11, 1855.

WHEREAS: Salmon are keystone species within the food webs of ocean, river, and forest ecosystems. Salmon keep populations of insects, aquatic invertebrates, plankton, and small fish in balance through predation, and in turn provide food for orca, seals, eagles, otter, kingfishers, and bear. The bodies of spawning salmon provide a critical resource that brings nutrients washed into the ocean by rivers back to the mountain and forest soils where the nutrients came from, completing a cycle that supports ecosystem biodiversity and the interdependent web of life.

WHEREAS: U.S. Congressman Mike Simpson of the Idaho's 2nd District has put forth [The Columbia Basin Initiative](#) outlining a possible path forward for the Northwest to transition to a better place that ends the salmon wars, protects all stakeholders on their terms and resets the energy landscape in the Northwest, so we maximize the benefits of the Bonneville System and our abundant renewable solar, wind and hydro and gives our salmon a much better chance at recovery. The Idaho Statesman Editorial Board calls this initiative, “a workable plan to remove Lower Snake River dams and save Idaho's salmon.”

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: We, the members of the Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship:

1. Acknowledge that the decline, extirpation, and absolute extinction of the Snake River salmon violates Treaty rights of the Northwest Tribes and Nations, and severely jeopardizes their economic well-being and cultural continuity.
2. Acknowledge that salmon are part of the interdependent web of all existence, and that salmon are critically important to the health of ecosystems on which we all depend.
3. Support The Columbia Basin Initiative and breaching the lower Snake River dams: Ice Harbor Dam, Lower Monumental Dam, Little Goose Dam, and Lower Granite Dam.

FURTHERMORE, we resolve, individually and as a congregation, to:

- Contact the following leaders, informing them of our support for The Columbia Basin Initiative, breaching the lower Snake River dams and reminding them of their responsibilities to the Tribes/Nations and their obligations under the Endangered Species Act:
 - President Joe Biden (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/contact/#page>)
 - Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland (<https://www.doi.gov/contact-us>)
 - Governor of Washington State, Jay Inslee (<https://www.governor.wa.gov/contact>)
 - Governor of Oregon State, Kate Brown – Thank her for her public support of breaching the lower Snake River dams (<https://www.oregon.gov/gov/pages/contact.aspx>)
 - Governor-Elect of Oregon State, Tina Kotek
 - Governor of Idaho State, Brad Little (<https://gov.idaho.gov/contact/contact-us/>)
 - U.S. Congressman Mike Simpson (<https://simpson.house.gov/contact/>)
- Support efforts of the Nez Perce and other affected tribes, along with other organizations working to restore healthy populations of anadromous fish.

Commented [1]: Gov. Kate Brown's term will end Jan. 9, 2023. Gov.-elect is Tina Kotek. I added her surname.