



## 2012 Winter Conference Shelton, Washington

### RESOLUTION #12 - 19

#### **“SUPPORTING WASHINGTON’S PROCESS TO REVISE ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND BETTER PROTECT ITS CITIZENS FROM TOXIC CONTAMINANTS”**

#### **PREAMBLE**

We, the members of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest 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 rights secured under Indian treaties, executive orders and the federal Trust Responsibility, and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws and Constitution of the United States and several states, to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian people, to preserve Indian cultural values, and otherwise promote the welfare of the Indian people, do hereby establish and submit the following resolution:

**WHEREAS**, the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) are representatives of and advocates for national, regional, and specific tribal concerns; and

**WHEREAS**, ATNI is a regional organization comprised of American Indians/Alaska Natives and tribes in the states of Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana, Nevada, Northern California, and Alaska; and

**WHEREAS**, the health, safety, welfare, education, economic and employment opportunity, and preservation of cultural and natural resources are primary goals and objectives of Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians; and

**WHEREAS**, ATNI is specifically committed to the present and future protection, restoration, and enhancement of historic and traditional tribal First Foods—water, fish, wildlife

and plants—for the perpetual cultural, economic, and sovereign benefit of Northwest native people; and

**WHEREAS**, tribal members throughout the region depend on clean water and soil for safe use and consumption of First Foods for traditional religious and cultural practices and for the health, economic and other benefits they provide; and

**WHEREAS**, the 2008 State of Washington Water Quality Assessment reported to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that hundreds of Washington water miles and acres are too polluted to meet water quality standards, and many species of fish, including salmon, resident fish, and shellfish in Washington (and other Northwest states) are exposed to contaminated water and toxic sediments; and

**WHEREAS**, Washington is obligated to undertake rule-making that incorporates human health criteria and limits the exposure to pollutants in water and sediments that contaminate fish consumed by people; and

**WHEREAS**, valid, reputable scientific studies have shown that native people (and other groups) eat significantly more fish than the “national average,” in part as a result of ceremonial, subsistence and other fishing practices secured by treaties with the United States, by rights recognized by the United States in statutes and executive orders, and subject the federal government’s affirmative duty to protect and safeguard under its Trust Responsibility; and

**WHEREAS**, environmental standards in Washington that regulate toxic contaminants now incorporate Fish Consumption Rates (FCRs) based on the national average “default” rate, creating greater, disproportionate risks for tribal members and others and contrary to the legal mandate that environmental conditions must support fish and their habitat from damage, degradation or destruction pursuant to tribal rights and treaties; and

**WHEREAS**, revised standards based on human health criteria including more accurate and inclusive Fish Consumption Rates, and their proper and effective implementation, will reduce the risks of exposure to toxic contaminants and benefit all citizens of Washington and surrounding states who consume fish and value the economic and other advantages of a cleaner and more healthy environment; and

**WHEREAS**, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho needs to update fish consumption and fish tissue contaminant studies to ensure water quality standards are protective of their tribal membership and seeks a cooperative partnership with EPA to update this information; and

**WHEREAS**, tribes in the United States and Canadian First Nations continue to coordinate to protect and improve water quality for the benefit of natural resources, First Foods, and indigenous people everywhere; now

**THEREFOR BE IT RESOLVED**, that ATNI supports Washington’s revision and implementation of environmental standards that incorporate more accurate, scientifically-sound human health criteria and associated Fish Consumption Rates, resulting in less exposure of tribal

fish consumers to contaminants and better protection of tribal First Foods, native people and all citizens of the region; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that ATNI and its member tribes are ready and willing to engage in Washington's revision and implementation of environmental standards to ensure that they are fair, open and respectful of all who have an interest in this important issue; and

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

**CERTIFICATION**

The foregoing resolution was adopted at the 2012 Winter Convention of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, held at Little Creek Casino Resort, Shelton, Washington on February 13 – 16, 2012, with a quorum present.



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Fawn Sharp, President



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Norma Jean Louie, Secretary