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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Legacy Moment for Northwest Leaders – For Salmon and a Better, Stronger Northwest**

*Rare Congressional Opportunity, if Missed Now, Will Be Dishonor to Northwest*

Lapwai, ID — Following statements from Washington’s Governor and U.S Senators expressing opposition to Rep. Mike Simpson’s (R-ID) proposal to honor treaty rights and save several species of salmon and steelhead on the verge of extinction, the Nez Perce Tribe immediately expressed disappointment in the notable absence of tangible solutions, recognition of the unique congressional opportunity before the Northwest, or acknowledgment of the dire situation that Columbia and Snake River salmon and steelhead face.

“After a day in which Rep. Simpson, together with Rep. Blumenauer (D-OR), discussed a viable framework and legislative opportunity at a regional conference devoted to the topic of preventing the extinction of Snake River salmon and investing in infrastructure, technology, and economic vibrancy in the Northwest, Gov. Inslee and Senators Murray and Cantwell have stated what they’re against, providing no substance with respect to what they’re for,” said Nez Perce Tribe Chairman, Samuel N. Penney.

“We agree that to solve this crisis we need a regional solution; we must strive to keep all communities that rely on the Columbia and Snake rivers whole; and we should follow the science. These are the very things that Rep. Simpson’s proposal set forth three months ago, and why the Nez Perce Tribe supports his proposal.”

“Our own biological analysis, released last week, reveals that salmon populations are headed toward extinction. We will not stand by and allow extinction on our watch. Our climate is changing and the best, coolest remaining habitat for the Columbia’s summer steelhead and spring chinook lies in the Snake River basin. We need to provide the safest journey to and from that habitat that we can. At the same time, we have a singular legislative moment – one not likely to come along again in our lifetimes – to address that biological crisis and solve the decades-long salmon wars in the Basin. We have the right Administration; the right leadership in the Senate; and support from Rep. Mike Simpson. This is a moment for action, not for more process.”

“This is not a time for generic statements of support for treaty rights and Northwest Tribes,” said Penney. “Northwest Tribes are united and asking for genuine support. We have a historic and unprecedented opportunity to take advantage of momentum behind a national infrastructure plan and secure funds to implement a plan stemming from Rep. Simpson’s framework and further regional engagement. We cannot let this moment pass us by. We cannot accept a failing status quo. We must act and our elected officials must lead the way with us, as Congressmen Simpson and Blumenauer have shown, with vision and courage while time remains in supporting this broad proposal and dialogue.”

Mr. Shannon F. Wheeler, Vice-Chairman of the Nez Perce Tribe, stated: “I’ve heard there will be a new statue of Billy Frank Jr. in the U.S. Capitol. Billy was a natural leader for salmon and for Treaty rights – and it’s great he’s being recognized. But I don’t think he would have cared about a statue of himself – he would have cared about the fate of the salmon, and the tribal people whose lives and cultures depend on the salmon in every sense. This is a moment for decisive leadership that would have made Billy Frank Jr. proud.”

“The Nez Perce Tribe welcomes the opportunity to meet with Senators Murray and Cantwell to discuss this issue in more detail. Time is short, but together we can take this unique opportunity to ensure a better, stronger Northwest for all. We stand ready to work with the congressional leaders of the Northwest on that effort,” concluded Chairman Penney.

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