



Agenda Item: 4a_revised
Meeting Date: February 13, 2024

PROCLAMATION OF THE PORT OF SEATTLE COMMISSION

WHEREAS, the abundance of fish and wildlife have enabled the Indigenous Tribes in the Pacific Northwest to thrive on resources such as salmon and shellfish since time in memorial; and

WHEREAS, in 1854-1855 the United States Government signed treaties with Tribes in Western Washington reserving their right to fish in “usual and accustomed” fishing areas in exchange for ceding 90% of their land to make way for colonization by settlers to the region; and

WHEREAS, the State of Washington prevented the Tribes’ from exercising their treaty-reserved rights for many years resulting in Tribal fishers facing many challenges, including citations and arrests for fishing in their usual and accustomed areas; and

WHEREAS, by the early 1960s, tribes only harvested between 2 and 5 percent of the annual salmon and steelhead catch in Washington State which resulted in Tribal leaders staging significant acts of disobedience known as “fish-ins” and “fish-wars”; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1970s, the United States Government successfully sued the State of Washington in the seminal case *United States v. Washington*, which resulted in direction to the State to regulate fishing in a manner that allowed full exercise of the tribes’ reserved fishing rights; and

WHEREAS, on February 12, 1974, Judge George Boldt of the United States District Court for the Western District of Washington issued his ruling in *United States v. Washington* in favor of the United States on behalf of the tribes and created a significant legal precedent regarding the enforceability of a treaty right; and

WHEREAS, Judge Boldt’s landmark ruling, now known as the Boldt Decision, was re-affirmed by the United States Supreme Court in 1979, holding that the tribes reserved the right to take up to 50% of the harvestable fishes in the areas the treaties covered; and

WHEREAS, the Port of Seattle recognizes the economic and cultural importance of fishing and a healthy marine environment and how the steadfast work of the tribes to protect and provide fish and shellfish benefits everyone; and

WHEREAS, the Port of Seattle was founded in 1911 by a vote of the people as a special purpose government to promote economic opportunities, and quality of life in the region by advancing trade, travel, commerce and job creation in an equitable, accountable and environmentally responsible manner; and

WHEREAS, the Port of Seattle conducts maritime operations within the Suquamish and Muckleshoot tribal governments' usual and accustomed fishing areas and has been working to avoid and minimize conflicts between fishing and commercial operations for many years; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the importance of the tribes' treaty rights, the Port has recently hired a tribal liaison to work with the Port and Commission to maintain government-to-government relationships and to identify opportunities for greater collaboration.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Port of Seattle Commission wishes to join the tribes and many others in celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Boldt Decision and affirm commitment to sustaining our partnership with tribes to assure there are fish and opportunities to fish, for future generations.

Proclaimed by the Port of Seattle Commission this thirteenth day of February, 2024.

Port of Seattle Commission