



The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon

Umpqua Molalla Rogue River Kalapuya Chasta

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August 17, 2026

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Chair
House Natural Resources Committee
1324-A Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6201

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Ranking Member
House Natural Resources Committee
1324-A Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6201

Dear Chairman Westerman and Ranking Member Huffman,

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (Grand Ronde) write in opposition of HR 9621, the Northwest Endangered Salmon Predation Act of 2026, as currently drafted.

Salmon has been a major source of food and cultural significance to Grand Ronde members and their ancestors for centuries. Their conservation is vital to the future of the Tribe. Because of this, Grand Ronde strongly supports salmon preservation efforts, including managing sea lions on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers and their tributaries. Sea lion predation is a major threat to the Tribe's fisheries, and invasive sea lions contribute to depressed salmon and steelhead populations and jeopardize their long-term viability. The Tribe played an important role in crafting the Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Predation Prevention Act in 2018, which provided states and tribes with the necessary tools to humanely manage sea lions. We have continued to work with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife as this law has been implemented, specifically at Willamette Falls.

While the Tribe supports sea lion management, Grand Ronde has significant concerns about recently introduced legislation regulating sea lion populations: the Northwest Endangered Salmon Predation Prevention Act. While the Tribe supports the goals of the legislation—to improve salmon habitat, restore endangered salmon and steelhead runs, and manage invasive predators that are disrupting the ecosystem of the rivers of the Pacific Northwest—as drafted it would not solve the problem, and would create new issues. The problem the legislation is seeking to solve is a Pacific Northwest problem, not just a Washington one, and it does not follow the boundaries of states. As a result, it is important to craft a comprehensive solution for the entire region, and the entire Columbia River basin, rather than trying to craft a narrow single-state solution.

The current law was drafted based on science and data, and limited management activities to known hot spots where sea lions were endangering salmon and steelhead populations. We believe the best approach to new legislation is to look at updated data and amend the current law to add new locations throughout Oregon and Washington for active management.

The legislation also defines “covered Indian tribe” as a “federally recognized Indian Tribe with treaty-reserved fishing rights in the western portion of the State of Washington.” The Tribe believes that this

Treaties

*Rogue River 1853 & 1854 ~ Umpqua-Cow Creek 1853 ~ Chasta 1854 ~ Umpqua & Kalapuya 1854
Willamette Valley 1855 ~ Molalla 1855*



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definition should cover all federally recognized tribes in the Pacific Northwest. There are no treaties regarding management of sea lions, and all interested Tribes should be included.

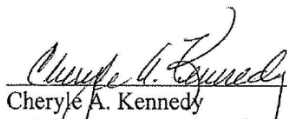
The bill proposes to modify section (f) of Section 120 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 by striking the mile and location limits on the Columbia River. If that language is removed, the “covered Indian tribes” could conduct lethal take on any tributary of the Columbia River, including the Willamette River. Salmon in the Willamette historically come to Grand Ronde’s reservation and Grand Ronde is the tribe that has historically occupied this area. Any language that would extend “covered Indian tribes” lethal take on the Willamette without including Grand Ronde is a problem. Language on this matter was extensively negotiated during the formation of sea lion legislation in 2018. There is no reason to change it.

Language in the bill that would leave the choice of method for dispatching sea lions up to the operator or allow a Tribe to grant that authority to any individual is very troubling to Grand Ronde. This provision ignores historic conversations about the ethical treatment of animals and could allow operators to shoot over and into waters in or near recreation areas.

Grand Ronde believes that managing sea lion populations is a multi-state effort that requires a more comprehensive solution than the Northwest Endangered Salmon Predation Act provides. We encourage additional improvements to the legislation before it is moved out of committee.

Please reach out of Stacia Hernandez, our Chief of Staff, at 541-654-2993 if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

hayu masi (many thanks),


Cheryl A. Kennedy
Tribal Council Chairwoman

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