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October 6, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Windy Schoby, Fish and Wildlife Policy Analyst- Idaho

SUBJECT: Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resources Management: Program Overview

BACKGROUND:

Presenters: Jay Hesse, Director of Biological Services, Nez Perce Tribe

Summary: The Nez Perce Tribe takes an integrated, life-cycle approach to protecting and restoring salmon, steelhead, Pacific lamprey, sturgeon, and other culturally important species. The presentation will highlight current Tribal fisheries and restoration efforts, concerns regarding the status and future of Snake River fish populations, and opportunities to strengthen regional collaboration. The discussion will also identify near-term conservation actions and investments that can complement ongoing restoration efforts and advance shared fish and wildlife objectives.

Relevance: The Nez Perce Tribe has a long-standing partnership with the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Council in implementing the Council's Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program, with BPA-supported fisheries work dating to 1983 and development of the Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery program. Over more than four decades, the Tribe's BPA-funded portfolio has expanded to include artificial production, research and monitoring, fish population assessments, and extensive habitat restoration throughout the Snake River Basin.

This presentation highlights a range of efforts supported through these contracts, as well as broader Tribal initiatives that contribute to a whole-of-government approach to salmon and steelhead restoration. It also provides an opportunity to discuss the Tribe's interest in working collaboratively with the Council to identify opportunities for increased investment in near-term conservation actions that can provide meaningful benefits for fish while supporting longer-term restoration and recovery objectives.

Background: Jay Hesse has worked for the tribe for over 30 years. He currently serves as the Director for Biological Services.

The Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Management works across a three-state area (north-central Idaho, northeastern Oregon, and southeastern Washington) corresponding to the tribe's ancestral homeland and is one of the largest tribal fisheries programs in the United States. The Department is a key regional fisheries co-manager and has played a significant role in restoring and managing salmon, steelhead, and other native fish populations throughout the Columbia River Basin.

DFRM's mission is to protect and restore aquatic resources and habitats consistent with the Nimiipúu way of life and the fishing and resource rights reserved by the Tribe under the Treaty of 1855. Its vision is to achieve healthy, sustainable, and harvestable populations of anadromous and resident fish throughout Nez Perce Usual and Accustomed areas.

The Department integrates fisheries restoration, habitat protection, supplementation, harvest management, research, monitoring, and adaptive management. Its approach emphasizes watershed-scale ("ridge-top to ridge-top") and full life-cycle ("gravel-to-gravel") management, recognizing that successful fish restoration requires addressing conditions across habitats and life stages. These efforts are grounded in the cultural importance of fish to the Nimiipúu and the goal of sustaining meaningful treaty harvest opportunities, cultural traditions, and fisheries resources for present and future generations.

More info:

[Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resources Homepage](#)

[Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resources Management Plan](#)