

Law to improve in-lieu sites

The U.S. House of Representatives has passed the Columbia River In-Lieu and Treaty Fishing Access Sites Improvement Act, sending it to the president's desk to be signed into law.

Oregon's U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, and Congressman Earl Blumenauer, along with Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell, and Congresswoman Suzanne Bonamici, announced passage of the bill in December.

The legislation would enable the Bureau of Indian Affairs to make important safety and sanitation improvements at the tribal treaty fishing access sites along the Columbia River, which are on lands held by the United States for the benefit of the four Columbia River Treaty tribes.

The bill, authored by Merkley and Blumenauer, was unanimously passed by the U.S. Senate on June 28.

"The current conditions at Columbia River fishing sites are unacceptable, unjust, and must be fixed," Merkley said.

"I've personally seen the shocking conditions at Lone Pine. We owe better to the tribal communities in the Northwest, and the very least we can do is uphold our commitments to tribes and ensure basic sanitation and safety. I'm pleased that our colleagues in the House of Representatives have joined us in passing this bill, and I urge

the president to sign it into law without delay."

"Congress has a responsibility to address the egregious misdeeds committed against the tribes who have lived along the Columbia River since time immemorial," Blumenauer said.

"We cannot pretend that this bill rectifies all of these injustices, but passing it is an important step in helping improve the lives of those who still reside there. This is just the start, and Congress must continue its work to right these wrongs."

"It is the federal government's duty to ensure our tribal communities along the river have access to safe,

sanitary housing and infrastructure at historical fishing access sites—a critical component of their culture and heritage, as well as an important source of sustenance—and this bill takes another vital step toward fulfilling our government-to-government obligation," Murry said. "As a representative for our state's tribes in the Senate, I urge the President to sign this bill into law."

"Improving the health and safety at tribal fishing sites along the Columbia River is an important and long overdue step toward righting historic wrongs," Wyden said.



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