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Corps of Engineers Decision Thrills Tribes

TAHOLAH, WA (5/9/16)— “We are thrilled with today’s announcement by the United States Corps of Engineers that it is denying the Gateway Pacific Terminal permit at Cherry Point because of the impact it would have on treaty rights,” said Fawn Sharp, President of the Quinault Indian Nation and the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians and Vice President of the National Congress of American Indians.

“It is an appropriate and just decision which should serve as an example for all decisions made by the U.S. government as well as governments at all levels that affect the Tribes.” she said. The coal export terminal, which is in the Lummi Indian Nation’s treaty-protected fishing waters, would have been the largest such facility in North America.

“There was no doubt whatsoever that the terminal would have had a negative impact on tribal fishing rights. But everyone who cares about fish and wildlife, the environment and human health should be happy with the Corps’ decision,” she said. “This is an historic victory for tribal treaty rights as well as for everybody else who lives here. Those who understand the great value of our natural resources to our health and culture, as well as the sustainable economy of the entire region will applaud today’s announcement.”

“We congratulate Lummi Nation and everyone else who worked so hard to achieve this outcome,” said President Sharp.

Lummi Nation Chairman Tim Ballew’s reaction to the Corps decision included the following comments: “This is an historic victory for treaty rights and the U.S. Constitution. It is a historic victory for the Lummi Nation and our entire region. This decision is a win for the treaty and protects our sacred site. Our ancient ones at Xwe'chieXen, Cherry Point, will rest protected. Because of this decision, the water we rely on to feed our families, for our ceremonies and for commercial purposes remains protected. The impact of a coal terminal on our treaty fishing rights would be severe, irreparable and impossible to mitigate. ”

President Sharp pointed out that when tribal treaty rights are protected it not only advances good stewardship; it speaks well for American integrity.

“For too long the treaties have been shoved aside and ignored by developers and others who exert great pressure on government entities for their own interests. Tribes battle constantly to protect and restore the ecological health of the land, water and sky because we do understand how important and sacred they are. It is time for our message to be heard. We all have to work together to restore hope in this country for a healthy future for our children.”

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