



Seattle Human Rights Commission

1963 – 2014 · 50 years of championing human rights and fostering a just future

Resolution 14-01: Calling on Washington State Department of Ecology to Raise the Statewide Fish Consumption Rate

WHEREAS, all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Human Rights Commission is committed to protecting and advocating for justice, human rights, and the equal treatment of all people who live and work in Seattle; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle was declared to be a Human Rights City on December 10, 2012, committing itself to protect, respect and fulfill the full range of inherent human rights for all as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and numerous other international human rights treaties; and

WHEREAS, health is an internationally-recognized human right outlined in Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights; and

WHEREAS, Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which the U.S. has ratified, and Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which the U.S. has signed, both provide that “in no case may a people be deprived of its own means of subsistence”; and

WHEREAS, Article 20(1) of the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples establishes and protects the right of indigenous peoples “to be secure in the enjoyment of their own means of subsistence” and Article 20(2) creates a basis for “just and fair redress” where indigenous peoples are deprived of these rights; and

WHEREAS, a state’s fish consumption rate is used to set safe and acceptable levels of pollutants that may be released into a state’s waters while still protecting the health of its citizens who consume fish harvested from the state’s waters; and

WHEREAS, a state’s fish consumption rate directly impacts its water quality standards and human health criteria; and

WHEREAS, the State of Washington has a fish consumption rate of 6.5 g/day; and

WHEREAS, Washington State’s Department of Health advises Washingtonians to consume two 226 gram servings of fish per week, a recommendation that substantially exceeds Washington State’s fish consumption rate; and

WHEREAS, contaminated fish are the primary pathway for human exposure to chemicals which cause cancer, irreversible neurological damage, and other harmful effects to human health and well-being; and

WHEREAS, the State of Washington's low fish consumption rate does not protect fish consumers from unsafe levels of toxics including but not limited to methyl mercury, Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs), and arsenic; and

WHEREAS, the State of Oregon, with a similar fish consumption-oriented population, recognized the severe threat to human health posed by a low fish consumption rate and thus set a new rate of 175 g/day at a risk level of 10^{-6} that would be protective of 95% of its overall fish consuming public; and

WHEREAS, members of Asian and Pacific Islander communities in Washington State consume fish at the rate of 306 g/day in the 95th percentile of those surveyed; and

WHEREAS, the Spokane Tribe in Washington State set its fish consumption rate to 865 g/day to reflect the true fish consumption of its members; and

WHEREAS, fishing and the consumption of fish holds immense cultural value and is considered a subsistence right within Asian and Pacific Islander and tribal communities; and

WHEREAS, human rights and public health standards are meant to protect *all* individuals, especially those most vulnerable;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Seattle Human Rights Commission hereby calls upon the Washington State Department of Ecology to raise its fish consumption rate to that of Oregon's at 175 g/day using a risk level of 10^{-6} to ensure that all Washingtonians, even our highest fish consumers, are protected in the free and equal exercise of our human rights to health and our own means of subsistence.

Adopted by the Seattle Human Rights Commission on Thursday, March 12, 2014.



Catherine Moore, Co-Chair
Seattle Human Rights Commission



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Ethel Branch

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