

Abstract

Public Opinion about Environmental Issues concerning American Indians, Treaty Rights and Tribal Policies

We will conduct formative research and build partnerships with key stakeholders in order to apply for a federal Sea Grant to examine factors that influence public opinion about American Indians, treaty rights and tribal policies that affect environmental concerns surrounding the Columbia River fisheries. This is a particularly salient undertaking as public attention to issues in sustainable fisheries continue to unfold in the Pacific Northwest. For example, the issue over sea lions feeding on salmon in the Columbia River raised concern among many stakeholders, yet to what extent such stakeholders influence public opinion is unknown. The conflict surrounding the sea lions feeding on salmon at Bonneville Dam garnered widespread media attention (in both traditional and nontraditional forums) and public opinion is critical in understanding how policies take shape. We will begin research to allow us to seek funding to assess public opinion with particular attention on what factors inform judgments of lay and expert audiences about key topics that affect environmental concerns that impact American Indians and other stakeholder publics.