

## The Drum Beats for Everyone

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Billy Frank Jr.<sup>1</sup>

Since 9/11, there have been many changes in this country, not the least of which has been severe undercutting of funds desperately needed to protect and restore our rivers, marine waters and the many habitats that sustain fish, wildlife and our own future well-being. There's also developed a wider divide between people from different walks of life.

I'm asking you, my brothers and sisters of all communities, to turn this situation around. Let's do all we can to save and protect our natural heritage, and let's do all we can to do it together.

The investments we make in fish, wildlife and a clean environment, as well as the respect we hold for each other, are actually investments in our children. If this country permits fear of terrorism, or anything else, to deter focus and funding away from the land that sustains us, the battle is lost.

The drum beats for everyone. It's a simple statement that says a lot. It says that regardless of your ethnic background, vocation, income, age or religion, you are part of this land.

Pollution, climate change, overpopulation and overzealous upland development all contribute to the destruction and diminishment of habitat required by salmon and all forms of life. These are critical challenges that we can resolve—but only if we work together. I hope we will acknowledge that our own lives are connected with and dependent upon all other life forms, as are our quality of life and sustainable economies.

We the people who hail from near and far must pledge to work with, and encourage our local, state, federal and tribal governments to do the things necessary to achieve environmental justice for all.

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<sup>1</sup> Billy Frank Jr., Nisqually, is chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission in Olympia, WA, and recipient of the *Indian Country Today* 2004 American Indian Visionary Award. This passage originally appeared in *Indian Country Today* 2008. Reprinted with permission of the author.

Let's all work together to turn the tide on habitat degradation and commit ourselves to the reduction of our carbon footprint, more judicious use of water, energy and other resources, the promotion of clean industry and energy, the elimination of pollution and the coordinated political action needed to protect our food source for generations to come.

Let's not kid ourselves. Such an effort won't be achieved simply with a pledge or accord. There must be more regular contact with one another and sharing of ideas. There must be greater understanding and follow through.

There is no goal more pertinent or important than our respect for Mother Earth. The drum does beat for everyone.