Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Council. My name is Terry Courtney. I am a member of the Warm Springs Fish and Wildlife Committee. I am here today to present comments on behalf of the four Columbia River treaty tribes: the Nez Perce, Yakama, Warm Springs and Umatilla tribes.

The PFMC chinook options meet the Snake River wild fall chinook criteria. The Columbia River tribes still support chinook options to maximize chinook escapement back to the river. The Columbia River tribes face a difficult fall season because the current analysis shows that the tribes can not achieve 50% of the total harvestable fall chinook due to ESA constraints.

Regarding coho fisheries, the total package of Columbia River fisheries is still being discussed. The tribes will be evaluating the combination of ocean fisheries and the states' planned in-river fisheries for consistency with the requirement to pass 50% of the upriver coho upstream of Bonneville Dam.

The tribes continue to question the mass marking and selective fisheries programs that are funded by the federal agencies. Although these types of programs provide some fishing opportunity, our experience with Columbia River steelhead proves that they do not restore natural stocks. Unless basic wild fish survival problems are corrected, mass marking and selective fisheries programs will only be a temporary fix. Our experience indicates that mass marking and selective programs create allocation imbalances between gear types. In addition, the long-term effects on wild stocks are unknown, yet the pressure to expand selective fisheries programs increases.

As long as the fish are managed consistent with the five conservation principles of U.S. v. Oregon, the tribes do not oppose non-Indian fisheries. All fisheries are paying the price for years of mismanagement of the fish and their environment to provide short-term economic gain to other industries. So often, fishery reductions are targeted as the primary method to achieve restoration. However, substantial progress can be made in other areas, such as, the hydro-system, habitat and hatcheries. The current reliance on transporting smolts around dams has not been successful. The Columbia River tribes support breaching of the lower Snake River dams, drawdowns, and additional spill during the summer months as actions necessary to restore the runs of wild fish. The Columbia River tribes also advocate identifying habitat problems and working with land managers and owners to find appropriate solutions related to irrigation and timber harvest.

The Snake River fall chinook supplementation program is a recent example of success. This year’s projected return of supplementation fish is substantial. The tribes’
supplementation efforts are designed for natural stock rebuilding and to benefit all fisheries. This program was implemented at the insistence of the tribes and with major opposition from state and federal parties. The National Marine Fisheries Service has proposed additional monitoring requirements that may inhibit the supplementation program. It appears to us that the federal government is concerned that the supplementation program may be “too successful.” Tribal supplementation programs in the Clearwater, Umatilla, Yakima, and Hood rivers are also demonstrating success in returning fish to naturally spawning areas. In our view, there are no surplus fish. Each returning fish is valuable for spawning.

While improvements are needed throughout the entire life cycle of the salmon, it is too easy to just blame hydro-system or habitat management. State and federal fishery agencies do have control over hatcheries and can immediately begin reforming these hatchery programs to assist in natural stock rebuilding.

The tribal vision for the future is for a healthy sustainable environment that produces fish populations that can support viable fisheries for both tribal and non-Indian fishermen. Salmon are the lifeblood of tribal culture. We hope that others share our vision and will work to do what is necessary to make that vision come true.

This concludes my statement. Thank you.