

**TESTIMONY OF
THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES
BEFORE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
MARCH 6, 2007
Sacramento, California**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Council. My name is Raphael Bill. I am a member of the Fish and Wildlife Committee of the Umatilla Tribe. I am here today to provide Testimony on behalf of the four Columbia River treaty tribes: the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes.

The *U.S. v. Oregon* parties will manage our 2007 in-river fisheries according to our three year Interim Management Plan for 2005-2007 Columbia River fisheries. This eases the pre-season planning process for the states and tribes since we have agreement over the allocation of in-river fisheries.

The fall Chinook forecasts for Columbia River stocks are expected to be down from the 2006 returns. The upriver bright forecast has dropped below 200,000 for the first time in six years. The Spring Creek Hatchery tule forecast is down from 2006 and only about one quarter of the 10 year average. The tribes are concerned about impacts to Spring Creek hatchery tules in ocean fisheries. They typically are harvested at high rates in Council area fisheries. With the low expected return this year, the tribes urge the Council to take a precautionary approach to proposing fisheries. Spring Creek hatchery tules are important to allow our tribes to access reasonable numbers of bright Chinook in the tribal fishery. If a shortfall should occur, the tribes don't want to be the only group having to restrict fisheries to meet the hatchery broodstock needs.

The forecast for Columbia River coho suggests a higher return than last year which gives some flexibility in coho fishery planning. However, according to recent management agreements for upper Columbia River coho, 50 percent of the upriver coho must be passed to the treaty fishing area upstream of Bonneville Dam. We expect the states to monitor and include **all** sources of non-Indian fishery mortalities in the ocean and the lower river to **ensure**

enough coho past Bonneville Dam to assist with rebuilding the upriver coho populations and so our tribes will have the opportunity to harvest their share of the coho.

We would like to report that in large part due to tribal restoration programs for Snake River Fall Chinook, over 8,000 Snake River fall Chinook reached Lower Granite Dam in 2006. Close to 3,000 of these fish were natural. The states, federal government and tribes are now working cooperatively on long term supplementation of Snake River fall Chinook, and this program has been successful in providing benefits to both tribal and non-tribal fishers while assisting in recovery efforts. Some groups have been critical of the concept of using hatcheries to support recovery of natural populations, but the Snake River supplementation program clearly shows that progress toward recovery can be made when hatchery programs are used appropriately.

The tribes are very concerned about expanding mark selective fisheries. Some groups such as the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are continually pushing for expanding mark selective fisheries when clearly they have shown no benefit to natural origin fish stocks. The federal government is requiring that most federally funded hatchery programs mass mark 100% of their hatchery releases. Most state hatchery programs are also mass marking 100% of their fish. Hatchery steelhead have been almost entirely mass marked with selective fisheries since the early 1980's. This did not prevent the ESA listing of most steelhead populations. And selective fisheries have done nothing to assist in the recovery of steelhead populations. Most hatchery coho have been mass marked since the mid 1990's. And the Lower Columbia Coho ESU was listed as threatened after the large scale implementation of mark selective coho fisheries. Clearly mass marking coho and implementing mark selective coho fishing has done nothing for wild coho populations. Mark selective fisheries cause management problems as well. The Pacific Salmon Commission has reported on the many problems that Chinook selective fisheries cause for the coast wide Coded Wire Tag Program. The tribes' experience with Chinook selective fisheries has also caused problems with the allocation of in-river catches. Because mark selective fisheries have shown absolutely no benefit to natural stocks and yet every year there is

more and more pressure for increased mark selective fisheries, the tribes believe that this is absolutely the wrong way to work towards recovering salmon stocks and providing healthy fisheries for everyone.

Additionally, the tribes wish to remind the Council that the Federal government has the legal obligation under federal law **to restrict other** activities that impact listed species **before** restricting the Columbia River treaty Indian fishery any further. This must be done to **comply** with the conservation principles established in *United States versus Oregon*. **Until everyone**, Indian and non-Indian, can fish at our full potential, we can not forget the work that we still have to do **together** to recover all salmon and steelhead runs for our future generations.

As the Council considers various fishery options over the next month, it should consider the following management principles.

Harvest impacts should account for **all** sources of mortality including mortality in groundfish fisheries along with non-harvest mortality. The harvest rates be sustainable and support rebuilding of weak and depressed stocks.

Non-tribal river and ocean fisheries **must** allow sufficient escapement so the tribes can harvest their fair share of the harvestable fish. The allocation between tribal and non-tribal fisheries must include mortalities from all sources, not just fishery mortalities.

Habitat needs continued protection. This includes upstream and tributary habitat as well in the estuaries.

The tribes also firmly believe that hatcheries can be used appropriately for stock supplementation in ways that support populations until the root causes of fish declines can be addressed. Habitat restoration as well as appropriate hatchery supplementation must be a part of the long term solution.

This concludes my statement. Thank You.