

**TESTIMONY OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES
BEFORE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

March 9, 2014, Vancouver, WA

Good day members of the Council. My name is Wilbur Slockish. I am a member of the Yakama Nation and a treaty fisher on the Columbia River. I am here with Bruce Jim, Chris Williams, and Herb Jackson and to provide testimony on behalf of the four Columbia River treaty tribes: the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes.

Salmon are of critical cultural importance to us as well as all tribes. Our relationship with the fish goes back forever. Our treaties with the United States guaranteed that the tribes would have fish and wildlife to harvest and plants to gather forever. The Constitution indicates that treaties are the Supreme Law of the land and are the highest form of commitment the United States can make between sovereigns. We expect the treaties to be fully upheld so that we can maintain our ties to our resources. The tribal relationship to our environment is centered around our First Foods which consist of water, salmon, deer, roots, and berries such as huckleberry. Salmon are essential to these first foods and to our cultural lives. Our first foods play important roles in our lives from our birth to our death. Our fish and wildlife are connected and historically have provided not only our food, but tools, clothing, and medicine.

Salmon are not only essential for the tribes, but salmon are important for everyone. This is why we need to keep working to rebuild salmon and steelhead runs.

We have several items we would like to bring to the attention to the Council.

Beginning with the good news, we are pleased to again report that the 2014 run reconstruction for Snake River fall chinook indicates that another very good return of natural origin fall chinook returned to Lower Granite Dam last fall. This was a run of over 14,000 natural origin fish. The total adult run was around 60,000 adult fish arriving at Lower Granite Dam. Back in 1990, only 78 natural origin fish passed Lower Granite Dam. This program is precisely the type of supplementation that the tribes have long advocated as a way to rebuild listed salmon stocks. The forecast for this year is for a run similar in size to the last few years. These returns demonstrate that it is possible to use the hatchery tool to help rebuild the wild fish without having adverse effects on wild productivity.

We also saw record upriver coho runs in 2014 in nearly all areas. These coho are products of tribal initiated efforts to restore and re-introduce these fish. These fish are building up natural spawning populations and also providing benefits to fisheries. Coho went extinct in the Snake River basin back in the 1980's, but in 2014 the coho count at Lower Granite was over 18,000 adults.

There are several issues that the tribes are concerned about this year.

We have some concerns about a couple of the forecasts. As we have told the Council before, the tribes do not agree with incorporating the tule production at Bonneville Hatchery as part of the LRH tule stock. These fish are BPH stock fish from Spring Creek Hatchery. They will have the same ocean distribution patterns as the rest of the BPH stock fish from Spring Creek which is not the same as the rest of the LRH stock fish. We would not expect ocean fishery impacts on these fish to be the same as other LRH tules. In our opinion, incorporating these fish into the LRH forecast will

artificially inflate the true LRH abundance and may produce a bias in estimating ocean fishery impacts.

We would like to point out some in-river management issues that have a bearing on ocean fishery planning. First, we want to remind the Council that the issue surrounding release mortality rates for in-river mark selective commercial seine fishing is not settled. WDFW has discovered issues with the data collected during the three year release mortality rate study that has required re-doing much of the analysis. This revised analysis is expected to be presented to the *U.S. v. Oregon* Technical Advisory Committee this week. In 2013 radio tags were incorporated into the research. WDFW has suggested that these radio tags indicate large numbers of lower river fish were caught in the research and as a result the release mortality rates initially calculated were biased high. However, this presumption is not consistent with coded wire tag data and run reconstruction estimates. There may have been an effect of the radio tags on the behavior of the fish which may make the radio tag data in-conclusive. Working through the complicated results from this research is taking the TAC a long time. Additionally, the in-river chinook fishery model has not been set up to project impacts from seine fishing. We urge the states to not plan 2015 seine fisheries until TAC gets a chance to make a recommendation on release mortality rates and until a fishery model is properly developed and reviewed.

We have also heard rumors that there are some sport fishers who may be supporting a proposal to manage Buoy 10 and/or the lower river sport fishery as a fishery that would retain bright stock chinook and release tule stock fish. This is not a workable idea for several reasons. One is that during the seine release mortality rate research, it was determined that trained state fishery staff can not reliably make visual determinations of bright and tule type fish at a high level of accuracy. There is too much overlap and gradation in skin color to be certain in all cases. Additionally, rules requiring releasing tules would be impossible to enforce. Such a plan would make our fishery modeling as well as the monitoring and evaluation of fisheries so ridiculously complicated that it would be impossible to estimate fishery impacts accurately. If sport fishers suggest plans such as this, they need to simply be told "no". We do not understand why some in-river sport fishers do not like tules. Tribal people have traditionally been taught that all types of salmon and steelhead have important uses. We gave names to the different types of fish and the products we made from them and used them for different purposes. Everyone should use the fish they catch.

As far as the initial ocean fishery options, we plan on carefully reviewing the modeled impacts on upriver chinook and coho stocks and will likely have more comments on these proposed fisheries at a later time.

This concludes our statement. Thank You.