

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

March 13, 2016, Sacramento, CA

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 today to provide testimony on behalf of the four Columbia River Treaty Tribes, the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla, and Nez Perce Tribes.

We would like to provide some more information on our perspective on managing fisheries. Before European contact, from time immemorial, we managed the fishery and other resources and had runs of millions of fish along with plants, game and plenty of clean water. Our chiefs along the river imposed strict laws to control fishing. This always ensured we passed fish upstream to provide for upriver tribal fisheries and to escape to spawn.

We still remember these traditional aspects of our management. These concepts had the effect of managing the resource in a sustainable way. These ideas can be difficult to explain in English. Our tribal languages explain these principles better.

Since the time of European contact, the Columbia Basin has become degraded through unsustainable resource extraction and habitat degradation. Our pristine water has become polluted. When we signed our treaties with the United States, we were aware of the coming problems and so we specifically retained the rights to hunt and fish in all of our Usual and Accustomed areas. This insures our ability to focus on our First Foods. Our First Foods include the water, the fish, the game and the roots and berries. These foods provide a healthy cultural link to our environment and our creator.

Among the many chiefs of the different tribes who negotiated the treaties, one of the Yakama Chief's, Chief Kamiakin expressed some reluctance to the treaty. He and others eventually agreed based on Issac Steven's and Joel Palmer's repeated promises. They repeatedly promised our tribes that entering into the treaty would not infringe on or hinder our tribal practices. Joel Palmer guaranteed that if "we make a treaty with you and our Great Chief and his council approves it, you can rely on all its provisions being carried out strictly." They promised that there will always be fish in the rivers and that our people would always be fed. We expect the United States to keep this promise.

We are glad that so many other tribes provided statements to the Council at this meeting. We are all in agreement that the conservation responsibility does not lay just with the tribes. We are not the ones who caused these declines of fish. All tribes have done what we can to increase production of fish and restore habitat. None of the tribes want to be the ones sitting on the bank while other people catch the last of the fish. We need to work together to build up runs so everyone can fish.

One area we can do more to work together on is dealing with predation. We have no issue against any of the creatures the creator meant to exist in our rivers or the ocean. But many of these predators are out of balance with the ecosystem. It is not the predators fault that humans have changed the environment and caused predators to have excessive impacts on our fish. But since this has happened, we must take action to restore balance by controlling these predators.

Species like sea lions, cormorants, and terns have to be controlled. Sometimes this control must include killing some of these animals. Unless we restore the environmental balance back to the way it was, there is no other choice.

We have been reviewing the model outputs for the ocean fishery options being considered. The projected returns to the Columbia River mouth of the upriver Columbia River chinook stocks are slightly higher than the initial pre-season forecasts projected. This implies that ocean fishery impacts are a bit less than average levels. For coho, the STT reports that greater than 50% of the upriver coho run is projected to reach Bonneville Dam which is the minimum required under the *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement. We would like to see the calculation of the actual percentage included in future reports before the ocean options are finalized. We will continue to review the projected impacts of the ocean fisheries and will have additional comments at the April meeting.

Thank you.