

**TESTIMONY OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES
BEFORE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
March 13, 2016, Vancouver, WA**

Good day members of the Council. My name is Wilbur Slockish I am a member a Commissioner with the Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission and a treaty fisher on the Columbia River. I am here with Shannon Wheeler to provide testimony on behalf of the four Columbia River treaty tribes: the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes.

As the Council establishes the initial options for ocean fisheries we would like to remind everyone about the forecasts for Spring Creek and lower river tules. While almost all other Columbia River forecasts are down this year, the tule forecasts stand out as being surprisingly high. They are both based on very high jack returns in 2016. But we know that outmigration conditions were poor in 2015 and we know that generally the ocean conditions have been poor in the last couple years. All forecasts have uncertainties. It is hard to be certain that the high jack returns will really indicate a large adult return when other indicators suggest otherwise. The Council should be cautious in setting fisheries affecting these tules. Until these fish actually show up, these are just paper fish.

We have other concerns about tules as well. There was some discussion by the Council about the possibility of re-visiting the lower river tule harvest rate matrix based on expected hatchery reductions of Mitchell Act fish. If the Council undertakes a review of this harvest rate matrix, we think the review should also consider whether the Spring Creek stock tules produced at Bonneville Hatchery should continue to be included in the LRH stock group. One reason we think this is not appropriate is that Spring Creek stock tules at Bonneville Hatchery have a different ocean distribution as compared to LRH tules. There may be similar questions about whether tule stock fish produced in the lower river SAFE areas should continue to be included as LRH fish. These two groups are likely not representative of wild lower river tules.

Regarding the Mitchell Act program, we remind the Council that the original intent of the Mitchell Act program was to mitigate for upriver fish lost due to development of the hydro system. The focus of the program should be to benefit upriver areas. All but six of 17 current programs are downstream of Bonneville. We also think it is important to adequately fund the Mitchell Act program, but it needs to be more focused upriver. We would not support utilizing Mitchell Act money to build weirs in the lower river tributaries.

We also think using Mitchell Act money to mark fish is a waste. Marking fish with an adipose fin clip was originally supposed to be to identify fish with coded wire tags, not to provide benefits to non-treaty mark selective fisheries. Mitchell Act money should be used to produce fish, but not be used for these other actions.

Tules are very important to the tribes. Each of the stocks of fish have their own names and traditional uses. Tules are commonly smoke dried. Tules have always played an important role in the traditional tribal diet and are still used for medicinal and ceremonial purposes.