

**TESTIMONY OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES
BEFORE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
March 9, 2014, Sacramento, CA**

Good day members of the Council. My name is Chris Williams. I am a member of the fish and wildlife committee of the Umatilla Tribes. I am here with Wilbur Slockish, 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 to time immemorial. Our treaties with the United States promised that we 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.

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 preliminary run reconstruction for Snake River fall chinook indicates that another record return of natural origin fall chinook returned to Lower Granite Dam last fall. This was a run of just approximately 21,000 natural origin fish which was about 10,000 more fish than last year. The total adult run was around 56,000. So it was not only a record run but the proportion of the run comprised of wild fish was above average. 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 that may even be larger than last year. 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.

Snake River fall chinook are part of the Upriver Bright stock which is also forecast to have a record return this year. Most of the Upriver Bright fish are destined for the Hanford Reach. The Hanford Brights are another example of a run that has been restored from its very low abundance in the late 1970's and early 1980's when it was rare to get counts of more than 30,000 fish at McNary Dam. Through better water management and the judicious use of hatchery production, the Hanford Reach fish are now setting records. On average over the past five years about 85% of the fish spawning on the Hanford Reach have been wild fish which also demonstrates that hatcheries can be a valuable tool to support wild populations.

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

We have some concerns about a couple of the forecasts. 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 also have some concerns about the Columbia River coho forecast. We have trouble reconciling this high forecast abundance with what seems reasonable to assume about the abundance of different components of the Columbia Run – especially the upriver coho destined for above Bonneville Dam. We expect the upriver coho to be an average sized run at best, not a very large run. We urge caution in setting ocean fisheries based on a very large forecast that may have a very similar and very large error as occurred last year.

We also need to point out some concerns about the conditions these fish may face when returning up-river. Last year we saw very poor migration conditions in the Snake River primarily due to high temperatures. There were significant passage delays at Lower Granite Dam in the summer and fall. There were some signs that fish were stressed in the early part of the fall when temperatures were highest and we feel fortunate that we didn't observe more mortality on these fish. We also very nearly did not meet the hatchery broodstock needs because of temperature related trapping limits. High temperatures at Lower Granite may be a significant concern again this year. We have done a great deal of work to benefit these fish and we do not want it to go to waste.

Temperatures were not only a problem in the Snake. The temperatures at Bonneville were also quite high last fall. We did note a number of fish that were injured and apparently diseased in our catch both upstream and downstream of Bonneville. We suspect that naturally occurring pathogens may have increased due to the combination of large numbers of fish and high temperatures. Pathogens were not a problem when the river was free flowing.

As the Habitat Committee reported today, another issue of concern is the recent damage to Wanapum Dam. To add some detail and clarification to the information presented by the Habitat Committee, there will be no adult passage at Wanapum or Rock Island dam until either they are able to refill the Wanapum Pool or until modifications are made to the fish ladders. Normally, fish counting begins at Wanapum Dam on April 15. While there does appear to be juvenile passage at Wanapum, the current operations of 100% spill at Rock Island create concern that this spill may be extremely hazardous to juveniles passing downstream. Currently, there are no estimates of when passage could be restored. Even downstream, we are worried about what the large increase in flows may do to the juvenile fall chinook which will be emerging from the gravel in the Hanford Reach this month. This incident points to a need to examine the integrity of all the mainstem dams. Wanapum Dam is clearly an issue of high importance to Columbia Basin fish managers and will be a concern for Council because this incident will affect three stocks that are important for Council managed fisheries, the upper Columbia summer chinook, the Upriver Bright fall chinook, and part of the upriver coho. We are very curious to learn what NMFS intends to do to ensure passage of endangered upper Columbia Spring Chinook and threatened upper Columbia steelhead which would normally be passing Wanapum Dam at least by mid-April.

We plan on carefully reviewing the modeled impacts on upriver chinook and coho stocks in this year's proposed ocean fisheries and will likely have more comments on these proposed fisheries at a later time.

This concludes our statement. Thank You.