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Supplemental Tribal Comments
April 2001

**Testimony of the
Columbia River Treaty Tribes
Before the Pacific Fishery Management Council
April 3, 2001
Sacramento, California**

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

The ocean fishery options under consideration this year appear to meet the ESA requirements for Snake River Fall chinook. However, because the forecast for Snake River Fall chinook is not finalized yet, we are placed in a situation where we can not completely judge the merits of any particular fishing option. Our tribes are faced with many challenges this year given the restrictions we will face for Snake River fall chinook as well as the balance of tule and bright fish in our fall fisheries.

Later in the meeting, the Council will receive a report from NMFS on salmon bycatch in the whiting fishery. We would encourage NMFS to not only report to the Council the number of salmon caught, but also any coded wire tag or other information indicating what stocks this fishery impacts. It is impossible to judge how much of a problem salmon impacts in the whiting fishery are if we don't know what stocks are impacted.

Yesterday, one of our staff gave a brief presentation to the Habitat Steering Group on the drought and hydropower situation in the Columbia River Basin. We appreciate the opportunity to work with the Council on this issue. Current data suggests that another El Nino event is forming in the Pacific which may extend the drought into 2002. Low flows and warm river temperatures will cause higher mortality. Predation, especially from birds will probably increase as well. This is a serious issue for the Council since the expected low survival of out-migrating juveniles this year and next will likely have adverse effects on both ocean and in-river fisheries for several years to come. There is still time for the Hydro-system operators to take actions to protect fish including providing some level of spill. NMFS still wants to transport fish in barges instead of providing spill, however transportation has not provided any benefits to fish. Transported fish do not return well to the natural spawning areas. Returning spawners is our measure of success.

The Columbia River tribes continue to question the utility of mass marking and selective fisheries as a long-term recovery strategy. It seems like selective fisheries for coho have advanced from the experimental phase to the full scale implementation phase. Mass marking and selective fisheries for chinook are increasing as well. There are still unresolved technical issues concerning the

mass marking and selective fishing for chinook that are far more complicated than for coho, making it difficult to detect the effect of selective harvest on escapement. The idea of selective fishing as a way to address wild stock concerns is seductive because it diverts attention from the real problem: low wild fish survival. The matter is also complicated in the Columbia River because some mass marked hatchery fish are listed under the ESA. Under current regulations it is legal for Columbia River sport fishers to retain some listed fish that happen to have adipose fin clips.

We are also concerned Columbia river sport fisheries still allow the use of barbed hooks. This is inappropriate given the increasing number of selective fisheries that hook and release wild fish. It is possible that some of these wild fish may be hooked and released multiple times.