

**Testimony of the
Columbia River Treaty Tribes
Before the Pacific Fishery Management Council
April 6, 2001
Portland, OR**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Council. My name is Terry Courtney Jr. I am a tribal fisherman and a member of the Fish and Wildlife Committee of the Warm Springs 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 package under consideration by the Council appears to meet the ESA requirements for Snake River fall chinook. The tribes are concerned about how well these fish will survive once they reach the Columbia River this year. The major source of mortality for Columbia River salmon is in the hydro-power system. The mortality from the dams is much greater than the mortality from ocean and in-river fisheries combined. With the low flows and warm river temperatures expected this year survival will be much less. Ocean and in-river fisheries and the Northwest economy will be impacted in two to five years. Even the hydro system biological opinion admits dams are expected to kill, on average, 88 percent of the downstream fall chinook juvenile migrants and 29 percent of the upstream fall Chinook adult migrants. The average hydro system mortality for juvenile steelhead is 46.5 percent and for adult steelhead is 17.5 percent. The mortality rates will be higher this year.

The federal government continues to want to deal with this problem by barging fish. The barging program has not achieved its objectives of increasing survival of fish returning to spawn as up river adults.

There is also a great deal of uncontrolled mortality due to predation from introduced exotic species as well as federally protected birds and marine mammals. Exotic species not only prey on salmon smolts but compete for food, oxygen and rearing space. Until these sources of mortality are controlled, it will continue inhibit recovery of our salmon.

The tribes would like to remind the Council that the Columbia River tribes are active in working toward the restoration and rebuilding of Columbia River salmon and steelhead runs. The tribes are involved in supplementation programs for chinook and coho. These supplementation programs are showing good results and are bringing fish back to areas such as the Umatilla, Wenatchee, and Yakama Rivers as well as areas in the Snake River Basin. The tribes are producing fish that support harvest by both tribal and non-tribal harvesters. The tribes have proposed additional supplementation programs in areas like the Salmon River and other areas that would offer even more benefits to Indian and non-Indian people.

Thank you.