

**TESTIMONY OF
THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES
BEFORE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
MARCH 7, 2006
Sea Tac, WA**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Council. My name is Bruce Jim. I am a member of the Fish and Wildlife Committee of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon and a treaty fisherman 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.

The *U.S. v. Oregon* parties will manage 2006 in-river fisheries according to our three year Interim Management Plan for 2005-2007 Columbia River fisheries. This eases the pre-season planning process for the states and tribes since we have agreement over the allocation of in-river fisheries.

The fall Chinook forecasts for Columbia River stocks are expected to be less than 2005. The upriver bright forecast is still expected to be reasonably strong, but not as strong as in recent years. The Spring Creek Hatchery Tule is down from the returns in the last two years to approximately half of 10 year average. Impacts on Snake River fall chinook will likely limit both in-river fisheries and ocean fisheries. Besides the ESA limits for Snake River fall Chinook, fisheries must be managed to meet the 7,000 Spring Creek tule escapement goal and the 43,500 McNary Dam escapement goal for Upriver Bright fall Chinook. With this in mind, we urge the Council to be conservative when setting ocean fisheries.

The forecast for Columbia River coho suggests a lower return than last year's actual return. Failure of Congress to adequately fund the Mitchell Act is a contributing factor to lower coho runs in the Columbia. According to recent management agreements for upper Columbia River coho, 50 percent of the upriver coho must be passed to the treaty fishing area upstream of Bonneville Dam. We expect the states to monitor and include **all** sources of non-Indian fishery mortalities in the ocean and the lower river to **ensure** the adequate passage of coho past Bonneville Dam in order for the tribes to ensure adequate numbers of coho return assist with rebuilding upriver coho populations and so the tribes will have the opportunity to harvest their share of the coho.

In large part to tribal restoration programs for Snake River Fall Chinook, over 10,000 Snake River fall Chinook reached Lower Granite Dam in 2005. While we don't have a final estimate of wild fish, we expect that close to 3,000 of these fish were wild. The states, federal government and tribes are now working cooperatively on long term supplementation of Snake River fall Chinook, and this program is providing benefits to both tribal and non-tribal fishers. However, hatchery production in the Columbia River has come under increased

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scrutiny. There are still many who mistakenly believe that our current well run hatchery programs are somehow putting wild fish at risk. Our hatchery programs, especially supplementation programs are well run and are providing benefits to both help recover populations and provide harvest benefits. Our supplementation programs have a strong record of success.

Unfortunately, certain members of Congress and the Administration, along with various hydropower and irrigation interests have been suggesting that both hatchery production and salmon harvest should be reduced to protect wild fish. They suggest this often at the same time as they claim that the Columbia River hydrosystem has done enough to reduce impacts on fish. The truth is that both ocean and in-river fisheries have made tremendous sacrifices over the years to protect wild fish and it is the hydrosystem that has not done enough. In 2006, there was no early spring spill at Bonneville dam to provide safe passage for the early migrating Spring Creek tules. BPA and the Corps of Engineers claim that the new "corner collector" bypass system is better than spill for these fish. The tribes do not believe the corner collector is adequate with the current flows and that future ocean and in-river fisheries will pay the price in reduced harvest opportunities on tules.

The Federal government has the legal obligation under federal law **to restrict other** activities that impact listed species **before** restricting the Columbia River treaty Indian fishery any further. This must be done to **comply** with the conservation principles established in *United States versus Oregon*. **Until everyone**, Indian and non-Indian, can resume fishing at its full potential, we can not forget the work that we have to do **together** to recover all salmon and steelhead runs for our future generations.

As the Council considers various fishery options over the next month, it should consider the following management principles.

Harvest rates must account for **all** sources of mortalities including mortalities in groundfish fisheries and non-harvest mortality and the harvest rates be sustainable and support rebuilding of weak and depressed stocks.

Non-tribal river and ocean fisheries **must** allow sufficient escapement so the tribes can harvest their fair share of the harvestable fish. The allocation between tribal and non-tribal fisheries must include mortalities from all sources, not just fishery mortalities.

Habitat needs continued protection and restoration and stock supplementation must be a part of the long term solution.

This concludes my statement. Thank You.