

**TESTIMONY OF
THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES
BEFORE PACIFIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
MARCH 10, 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 additional testimony on behalf of the four Columbia River treaty tribes: the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes.

As the Council considers the options for 2006 ocean salmon fisheries, we have several issues of concern that we wish to remind the Council of. In our view, these issues warrant caution in planning ocean fisheries. First, as was mentioned in previous discussions regarding PSC issues, there is still some uncertainty about impacts on U.S. stocks in West Coast Vancouver Island fisheries especially related to changing Canadian fishing plans. Additionally, we have not had the "manager to manager" meeting with Canada to share information about proposed fisheries for this year. Without a full understanding of impacts in Canadian fisheries, it is challenging for the Council to make appropriate decisions regarding U.S. fisheries.

The Columbia River tribes also have concerns about our ability to fully assess impacts to stocks of concern in ocean fisheries especially lower Columbia River coho. The listing of Lower Columbia River coho has necessitated a higher level of scrutiny of fisheries impacting coho. Unfortunately, we are not fully convinced that our modeling tools have the ability to predict impacts with the precision that we seem to need to manage for. In part this is due to questions to how well the stocks in the models represent wild fish and in part due to uncertainties caused by the large coho selective fisheries in the ocean and in-river. We are concerned both about the appropriate assumptions for release mortality rates and assumptions about the possibilities for multiple encounters. The tribes are concerned the rates currently used may not always be the most appropriate. We should make continual efforts to determine the most appropriate release mortality rates for the fishery location and the gear used.

During the status review, the Columbia River tribes expressed concerns that we did not think that the analysis that went into determining the Lower Columbia Coho ESU boundaries or in determining the status of the ESU was necessarily done appropriately. We still hold these views

Our concerns about the modeling and management of Lower Columbia coho spill over into concerns about managing fishery impacts on upriver coho that the tribes are trying to restore. The Columbia River tribes believe strongly that the real answer to our coho problems is to both restore coho habitat and to use appropriate supplementation to rebuild coho runs so that everyone can have reasonable and sustainable coho fisheries.

We also want to bring the Council's attention to the issue of predation in the Columbia River. While the news is full of stories of sealion predation on adult spring Chinook and sturgeon in the Columbia and clearly this is a major issue for the tribes and other in-river fishers, we recognize it is less of an issue for Council managed fisheries. However, there is much less attention paid to predation on juvenile fish which is not only an issue for in-river fishery management, but should concern the Council as well. We still have colonies of Caspian terns both in the lower river and in the upper Columbia/lower Snake River areas. We also have a large number of cormorants in the lower river. We know that seals and sealions prey on smelt in the lower river in the late winter and spring, but we do not know to what extent they prey on salmon smolts that have overwintered in the lower river. The tribes are concerned that there is not enough attention paid to quantifying the level of predation that is occurring and certainly not enough attention to controlling predation. The tribes believe that these predators are not in balance with the ecosystem and cannot be left unmanaged in a damaged ecosystem that has been so severely impacted by other human activities. The tribes support appropriate management of these healthy populations of predators including lethal removal when it is determined to be necessary. If we do not do something to manage predation, ocean and in-river fisheries will suffer, and more importantly, salmon restoration will suffer.

Because of inappropriate predator control, water management, ongoing hydrosystem problems, not enough supplementation, and other failures to restore salmon, the Council is forced to make difficult decisions that stretch our abilities to even assess impacts of fisheries and fail to meet the needs of treaty and non-treaty fishers. The tribes hope we can work together to solve these problems.

This concludes my statement. Thank You.