

**TESTIMONY OF
THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES
BEFORE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
April 4, 2006
Sacramento, CA**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Council. My name is Rapheal Bill. I am a member of the Fish and Wildlife Committee of the Umatilla Tribe. 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.

While the tribes continue to urge the Council to use conservatism in recommending ocean fisheries that impact Columbia River stocks, we would also like to discuss some issues with more long term implications for fisheries.

The tribes are very concerned about the pressure to reduce hatchery production under the guise of hatchery reform. We are concerned that there is both budgetary pressure in that the federal government seems to want to simply spend less money on hatchery programs.

We also see pressure to potentially reduce production from some of our important mitigation programs such as the Mitchell Act and John Day mitigation programs. We are very concerned that arguments are being made claiming that our mitigation programs that often provide significant numbers of fish for both ocean and inriver fisheries are somehow putting wild fish at risk and should therefore be reduced. The tribes believe that there are biologically sound ways to manage our mitigation hatcheries to both produce fish for fisheries and minimize any risk to wild fish. **This has been the objective of tribally sponsored production and supplementations programs.** We do not believe that it is appropriate to simply reduce fish production. Sound science should be used in hatchery management instead of political ideology. As long as the Columbia basin dams are in place, the mitigation responsibility exists.

The tribes support not only maintaining mitigation production, but also support supplementation and recovery programs such as the Snake River Fall Chinook supplementation program that releases over 5 million juveniles per year. Production needs to be balanced with proper flows to ensure juveniles survive their migration to the ocean. Predation from sea mammals need to be controlled as well.

Our tribes were however pleased to learn NMFS is recommending removing four dams on the Klamath River. **Clearly, dam removal can be an appropriate step towards**

recovery for many salmon stocks. While there are some similarities between the Columbia and Klamath, we recognize there are many differences. However, we wish NMFS was more supportive of Dam breaching on the Snake River. Snake River fall Chinook would benefit significantly from breaching of the four lower Snake Dams. This action would provide **great benefits to the Snake River ecosystem** and provide benefits to both ocean and in-river fisheries.

We encourage the Council to support the tribes in our efforts to ensure proper river management and appropriate hatchery production that supports fisheries and salmon recovery. This will help recover the ecosystem and sustainable salmon harvest for the future.

This concludes my statement. Thank You.