TESTIMONY OF
THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES
BEFORE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
April 6, 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.

As we near the completion of the planning for 2006 ocean fisheries, we would like to remind the Council of some of the issues bringing us where we are now and some of the events outside the Council process that will influence where we will end up in the future.

Salmon returning to the Columbia River run a gauntlet of fisheries from Alaska through Canada and west coast as well as in-river fisheries. If we do not continue to protect Columbia and Snake River salmon, all these fisheries and fishing communities including tribal communities will suffer.

We have concerns about how we are managing our ocean fisheries. We are concerned that some, especially Canadian fisheries, are not being monitored and sampled appropriately. We are also concerned that CWT data from a number of ocean fisheries do not seem to be finalized in the PSMFC Coded Wire Tag database on a timely basis. We understand that some 2004 ocean CWT recovery data are not finalized yet. This complicates post season analysis of ocean fisheries and makes it technically more difficult to use historic data to plan future fisheries. There are implications not only for planning northern fisheries but Council area fisheries as well. We also need to continually work on ensuring we are using technically sound release mortality rates. We also need to address the problem of increased uncertainty in our modeling due to damage to the CWT system as a result of mass marking and selective fisheries. The increased cost of mass marking fish reduces the amount of money available for other fishery management activities such as sampling

fisheries. We hope that progress can be made in addressing these management shortcomings in the near future.

We are also concerned that there are indications that we are entering a period of lower ocean productivity. We recommend that the co-managers work together to develop appropriate forecasting and modeling techniques to ensure that we are able to account for natural changes in ocean productivity in our fishery planning.

Additionally we recommend that when fisheries are constrained to protect wild stocks that appropriate measures are taken to protect the offspring of the fish that fisheries forego harvest on. In the Columbia, we believe that when fisheries need to be constrained, **it is appropriate and necessary for flows and temperatures to be managed to support survival of the next generation of juveniles**. Keeping migrating fish in the river with proper flow and spill will increase survival instead of barging and trucking which has not shown real benefits. **Un-naturally high populations of fish, bird and mammal predators need to be controlled to protect migrating salmon.** The states need to work through the Section 120 process of the Marine Mammal Protection Act to address the sea lion problem in the Columbia.

Record returns of Snake River fall Chinook have occurred in recent years. While several years of better ocean survival can not be discounted as a contributing factor, the supplementation program can not be denied as the primary reason for this strong increase in run sizes. Supplementation needs to be continued especially in light of recent evidence of reduced ocean survival. However, this situation does not eliminate the need for ocean fisheries to be managed conservatively to ensure continued progress towards recovery. Even with this success, the supplementation program is not without critics. The tribes are largely responsible for the initiation of fall Chinook supplementation programs above Lower Granite dam and continue to work cooperatively with our state and federal co-managers to manage this program in ways that benefit both fisheries and recovery of the natural fall Chinook run. The tribes have long supported the appropriate use of hatcheries to support recovery of all salmon stocks

throughout the Columbia Basin. We are very concerned about cuts in Bonneville Power Administration funding supporting salmon recovery programs. BPA has a financial responsibility to maintain this essential funding. The federal government must continue to protect and restore the resources guaranteed to the tribes through their treaties.

This year's ocean fishery planning has involved lots of hard work and very difficult decisions that will hopefully help insure a lot of Snake River fall Chinook are going to reach the spawning grounds. However, because of Federal Government policy, the offspring of these fish we are working to protect face a very uncertain future from poor water management. While we commend those who have made decisions to reduce their fisheries to protect fish that are so important to the tribes and other people, it is a perfectly natural question for you to ask, "Why are we going through this very difficult exercise when the end result will be that the fish we save will produce offspring that will be simply ground up in the eight Federal dams?"

Because of the Tribes' cultural and spiritual connection with salmon, the tribes are extremely focused on the health of the salmon and the water they live in. This is what produces our desire to recover fish populations. The Umatilla Tribe has successfully shown that it is possible to work with private landowners and irrigators and the State of Oregon to re-introduce coho, spring Chinook and lamprey into the Umatilla River. By working cooperatively the tribes have shown that it is possible to make improvements to habitat and water conditions to support salmon and make rivers healthy again by reintroducing species. The Nez Perce Tribe has worked successfully with the State of Idaho and the USFWS to reintroduce coho into the Clearwater. The Yakama Nation and the State of Washington have coho recovery programs and programs for other species in the Yakama and Wenatchee. The Warm Springs tribes have spring Chinook restoration programs in the Hood River and programs in other areas restoring other species. While these programs are all still works in progress, it shows that by working cooperatively with the tribes it is possible to do things that both support salmon recovery and provide fishery benefits for ocean and in-river fisheries. The tribes working with

their strong allies and their co-managers have worked hard to recover fish populations for the benefit of all, but need continued funding to maintain and expand these programs.

The reason that the Ocean fishery and lower Columbia River fisheries are required to ensure that 50% of the upriver coho reach Bonneville Dam is not just to meet treaty fishery needs but to ensure enough fish return so that these recovery programs can continue to produce harvestable and sustainable runs of coho in the future.

The tribes have many other programs and proposals that will assist with recovering all salmon runs to healthy harvestable levels. The tribes have engaged in many successful habitat improvement projects in many tributaries throughout the basin and develop an annual water management plan for the Columbia River that proposes flows, temperatures, and spills that will provide benefits to fish while including appropriate allowances for irrigation and power generation. Unlike programs like the flawed barging program, it is these types of positive pro-active programs that need to be implemented in order to recover fish populations to healthy sustainable harvestable levels. The barging program claims to be successful simply because fish are still alive when they let them out of the barge, but the program is not successful because many of these fish do not return as adults. Mortality from barging and delayed mortality is a significant concern. We feel confident that the jointly agreed to transportation study program being implemented this year will demonstrate this to be the case.

This concludes my statement and I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank You.