

**TESTIMONY OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES
BEFORE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

April 3, 2007

SeaTac, WA

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Council. My name is Herb Jackson. I am a member of the fish and wildlife committee of the Nez Perce Tribe 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.

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

The tribes are concerned about mixed messages that are being given by the federal government. On Thursday March 29, Bob Lohn, the NMFS Northwest Region Administrator was quoted in the Tri City Herald newspaper as saying that, "Salmon runs have improved dramatically in the Columbia River Basin in the last six or seven years, thanks to improvements at the dams and long term fish monitoring." First we would like to clarify that since 2001, we had record or near record returns for most runs in the Columbia in recent decades. Since then most runs have trended downward. To what ever extent that changes in hydrosystem management have had any positive effect on fish, this has not been sustained. In the tribes opinion, the hydrosystem has not done nearly enough. Mr. Lohn also stated that salmon have somehow adapted to changes in the river management and implied that harvest and tributary habitat should be the areas we focus on to achieve recovery. We are baffled that that someone in the Regional Administrator's position either does not understand the relative impacts of harvest versus the hydrosystem or worse may be biased against fishing. The hydrosystem has significantly more mortality on salmon and steelhead than fisheries. The

tribes on the other hand believe we should be supporting efforts to analyze the costs and benefits of removal of the lower Snake River dams such as was discussed in public comment yesterday. The tribes are extremely confident that any fair analysis of dam breaching or dam removal will show that breaching or removal of the lower Snake River Dams will be beneficial to both salmon recovery and society in general. Dam removal will be a win-win decision for us all.

Another issue of concern to the tribes is an article that appeared recently in the Northwest Fishletter, an online news source, in which a high ranking NMFS staff member is quoted discussing the US federal government's apparent position that Canada should adopt Chinook selective fisheries targeting Columbia River hatchery tules. Besides the tribal concern about the lack of protocol in discussing what the tribes view as confidential international negotiations in the media, we have trouble balancing these remarks with the statements in the NMFS ESA guidance letter this year that states that there should not only be reduced harvest impacts on Coweeman tules, but reduced Columbia River tule production as well. We have difficulty in making sense of NMFS's support for increased foreign harvest of Columbia River tules and supporting reduced production of these same fish. Where will this leave U.S. Indian and non-Indian fishermen?

The tribes, on the other hand, support responsible use of hatchery programs to support fish populations while we make changes to habitat and passage conditions that will allow salmon recovery. The tribes believe this can be done at the same time as hatchery fish are produced to support both treaty and non-treaty fisheries. **This has been the objective of the four tribally sponsored production and supplementation 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. Excessive predation from sea mammals and birds need to be controlled as well.

Finally, we encourage the Council to support the tribes in our efforts to ensure proper river management to help recover the ecosystem and appropriate hatchery production that supports fisheries and salmon recovery.

The four Columbia River Treaty Tribes do not want to be faced with an unfair portion of the conservation burden for Columbia and Snake River stocks.

This concludes my statement. Thank You.