

**TESTIMONY OF
THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES
BEFORE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
April 5, 2007
SeaTac, WA**

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the Council. My name is Kirby Heath. I am a member of the Fish and Wildlife Committee of the Warm Springs 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 2007 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.

It is a struggle for all of us to plan reasonable fisheries when we are faced with so many weak wild stocks. The tribes believe when fisheries are constrained to protect wild stocks, that appropriate measures are taken to protect the offspring of these fish that fisheries foregone 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.

We are dismayed with WDFW's response to the challenges of planning fisheries by proposing increasing numbers of mark selective fisheries within Puget Sound. We do not think this is a useful response to provide fair levels of treaty and non-treaty fisheries or to help recover naturally spawning fish. The tribes are concerned that selective fisheries are increased without a full analysis of the effects of the release mortality rates and the effects of reducing the size limits for the fish. These selective fisheries will have adverse effects on the coast-wide coded wire tag system. We are also concerned about whether these proposed selective fisheries can be adequately

monitored and evaluated. We are opposed to this accelerated schedule for implementing new selective fisheries and are worried that WDFW will soon be proposing selective Chinook fisheries in the ocean.

We also believe that **un-naturally high populations of fish, bird and mammal predators need to be controlled to protect migrating salmon.** The states of Oregon and Washington should be commended for beginning work through the Section 120 process of the Marine Mammal Protection Act to address the sea lion problem in the Columbia. Several Northwest congressmen have reintroduced legislation that will potentially allow the lethal removal of problem sealions. Fishermen should contact their congressmen and let them know their views on this legislation.

Increased returns of Snake River fall Chinook have occurred in the last few 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. Hatchery 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. We 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. Funding for Mitchell Act and other hatchery programs in the Columbia Basin is at risk. If hatchery programs are not funded adequately, fisheries and salmon recovery will suffer.

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. All four tribes use hatchery supplementation as part of their restoration programs. 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 are initiating reintroduction programs above Round Butte Dam. 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. We 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. For the tribes, water is a sacred giver of life and is necessary to support tribal cultural and spiritual practices. Unlike programs like the flawed barging program, it is these types of positive proactive 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.

In conclusion, we do think that this years' ocean fishery package should provide adequate escapement of Spring Creek Hatchery tules but only just barely. The tribes do not want to be faced with an unfair portion of the conservation program.

This concludes my statement. Thank You.