

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

March 12, 2015, Vancouver, WA

Good day members of the Council. My name is Bruce Jim. I am a member of the Fish and Wildlife Committee of the Warm Springs Tribes and a treaty fisherman on the Columbia River. I am here with Wilbur Slockish and to provide testimony on behalf of the four Columbia River treaty tribes: the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes.

It was 58 years ago this week that Celilo Falls our most important fishing site on the mainstem of the Columbia River was flooded. This was done over the objections of the tribal people. It caused permanent harm to our culture and our fish. The United States promised that fish would be produced for us to catch. This promise was made not just when The Dalles Dam flooded Celilo Falls, but even earlier, in 1937, when Bonneville Dam was finished. This promise was made again when the John Day Dam was built. But many runs have not yet recovered from the long history of abuse by so called development. We have worked hard to develop programs to recover our fish and in many cases we are working more cooperatively with the non-Indians on fish recovery initiatives. But there is much more to do. When we have good returns of fish as we have seen in the last few years, there is no reason to try and catch every last one of these fish. It is ok to pass fish to escapement to help improve the runs. So when we hear people say there are too many upriver brights returning and northern fisheries should be increased, it disturbs us. Ocean and in-river fall season fisheries have all benefited in recent years from the good returns. But there is no reason to not let increased numbers of fall chinook spawn. This will help provide a buffer in case conditions for fish are not as good in the future.

Among the many threats to salmon in the Columbia Basin are the predators that are out of balance with the environment. Many people have thought that the huge numbers of seals and sea lions are only a problem for spring chinook. But with the record numbers of pinnipeds and the fact that so many stay in the river year round, these animals are impacting summer and fall runs as well. We have sea lions that live year round in the Bonneville Pool. There is legislation that has been introduced in Congress that would give the states and tribes increased authority to manage problem sea lions. Legislation such as this is needed to improve the situation with sea lion predation.

Bird predation is another serious threat to juvenile fish in the Columbia. Millions of smolts are consumed each year. This happens not only in the estuary, but all the way up into the tributaries as well. The Corps of Engineers has issued a final Environmental Impact Statement for the management of Cormorants in the estuary. We would have supported a stronger plan to deal with cormorants, but this effort will be a significant improvement. We need to work together to ensure that the preferred alternative in the EIS is implemented and is not blocked or delayed through litigation. We need to make sure the public is aware of the problems caused by bird predation and the need for management of the largest colony of Double Crested Cormorants anywhere. We all understand that these predators are native species that have always been around eating fish at some level. But people need to know that our development of the basin has made the environment a much friendlier place for predators and a much more difficult place for fish. When the environment is this far out of balance, we have no choice but to manage predators.

This concludes our statement. Thank You.