

Many Washington Treaty Tribes have grave concerns for the salmon returning in 2016, particularly coho. Due to their consistent life history which is dominated by 3 year old fish, with their last year and a half spent in the ocean, they are heavily impacted by ocean conditions. Recent ocean conditions have been extremely hostile to coho growth and survival, as evidenced by the 2015 returns to Puget Sound and the Coast of Washington.

Out of concern for coho salmon in 2016, the undersigned tribes submit this testimony to the Pacific Fisheries Management Council:

2015 Washington coho salmon returns were much lower than expected and in many cases the lowest on record, well below escapement needs in most rivers.

The returns of coho and pink salmon to the Washington coast and Puget Sound rivers in 2015 was much lower than expected, scientists believe, in large part due to poor ocean conditions encountered by juveniles entering the ocean in early 2014. Many runs were an order of magnitude lower than forecast (e.g. Skagit coho was less than 10% of forecast and the lowest return on record). Salmon entering the ocean in 2015 and 2016 have, or will, experience similar conditions.

2016 coho salmon returns are forecast to be as low, as or lower than 2015 in almost all cases.

Forecast abundance of both wild and hatchery coho to most Washington Rivers are far below their spawning escapement needs, even without any fisheries impacts. **To ensure that as many coho as possible return to spawn, many tribes have eliminated (or minimized) plans for terminal area commercial fisheries which directly or incidentally take coho.** For many of these tribes these fisheries are either their main fisheries or their only fisheries, but they recognize that conservation of the resource is the first priority under these circumstances.

With the reduction or cancellation of these terminal area fisheries, we believe that the responsible option for all resource managers in 2016 is to eliminate or

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significantly reduce all commercial and recreational fishery impacts which impose mortality on these imperiled coho stocks. Such actions may include spatial, temporal, or fishing changes and may even result in cancellation of fisheries. This year these coho populations need every returning fish to contribute to spawning and the recovery from two years of unprecedented low returns.

This logic applies not only to Southern US fisheries, but to Alaska and Canadian fisheries also.

The coho annex of the Pacific Salmon Treaty allows “**up to 10%**” Exploitation Rate for US fisheries and the same for Canadian, when stocks are in classed as “critical”. HOWEVER, when the coho annex was developed there was no idea that coho stocks would be in this situation. Again, these populations need every possible spawning fish to return and again, we believe that the responsible option for all resource managers in 2016 is to substantially reduce or eliminate all fisheries which imposes mortality on these imperiled coho stocks; this includes many pre-terminal mixed-stock fisheries.

The forecast for returning coho in 2016 is dire and well below the conservation needs for many natural and hatchery stocks.

We call for fisheries managers to substantially reduce or eliminate all commercial and recreational fisheries which are forecast to take coho from the stocks of concern, which includes nearly every Washington coho stock.

We also request that a “Zero Ocean Fishery Option” be included in the FRAM modeling scenarios, as a realistic starting point for PFMC and North of Falcon discussions this year.

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Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, Scott Schuyler

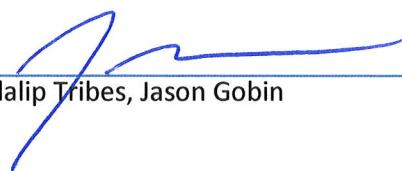
Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, Kevin Lenon



Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, Jeff Tatro



Squaxin Island Tribe, Joseph Peters



Tulalip Tribes, Jason Gobin

Nisqually Tribe, Willie Frank III



Muckleshoot Tribe, Phil Hamilton



Puyallup Tribe, Fred Dillon