

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

April 9, 2016, Vancouver, WA

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

We would like to provide a few of our thoughts on this year's ocean fishery options. Our first comments are related to the management of Alaskan fisheries. Last year, the chaos and uncertainty associated with Alaska's refusal to accept the CTC model calibration left us with the feeling that our co-management was like a very leaky boat. This year, it seems like none of these holes has been patched and we are taking on water and starting to list.

The Columbia River Tribes are supportive of the CTC model calibration that utilized all agency submitted forecasts. We think it is the sole responsibility of the states and Tribes to provide the pre-season forecasts for stocks spawning in the geographic areas they are responsible for. We do not think it is proper for others to demand changes in forecasts. We are always willing to look at ways to improve future forecasts, but not willing to make arbitrary changes to our current forecasts. The CTC model calibration has produced an AI for the South East Alaskan fisheries of 2.06. This is the AI that needs to be used.

Last year in addition to chaos with the model calibration process, the AI limit was not met and the South East Alaskan fisheries exceeded their preseason target by 143% or over 100,000 chinook.

Fortunately, we think that the Department of Commerce is in possession of a pump to address our leaky boat. The Columbia River Tribes expect that the Secretary of Commerce will fulfil the United States' trust responsibility to the Tribes and take the necessary action to make sure that the chinook fisheries in south east Alaska will be managed to stay within the AI catch ceiling of 355,600. Our Tribes have treaty rights to these fish. Case law requires the Federal Government to protect these fish and our rights.

Further, we would like NOAA to provide this Council a list of corrective management actions that will be taken for this season to ensure that the same problems that led to an over harvest of more than 100,000 chinook in 2015 does not occur again this year.

Additionally, we would like to comment on the option of zero fishing North of Cape Falcon. Our Tribes are of course concerned about the expected low returns of upriver coho this year as everyone is concerned about expected low coho returns all over. We support needed limits on coho fishing. But when fisheries are eliminated completely, it shows we are not addressing the problems facing fish in the correct way. Our Tribal vision for salmon recovery is one that focuses on addressing the key problems that salmon face. The key factors impacting the long term recovery of coho are habitat related and in many cases related to survival through the hydro system. Our Tribes support strong efforts to rebuild coho and other salmon populations by restoring habitat, increasing survival through the hydro system, as well as using hatcheries in restoration and to provide fisheries. While

doing these things, we think it is completely appropriate to implement reasonable levels of fishing. Fishing has not caused these problems with salmon abundance and cannot fix them alone. We need to address the survival and productivity of coho in fresh water so that the fish can better deal with periods of low ocean survival. We recognize that there are key factors at work that are related to poor ocean conditions, and although it is clear that human activities are responsible, it is difficult to reverse these changes in a relatively short timeframe. However, there are plenty of direct actions that could be made in the short term to improve coho habitat and could alleviate the conservation burden that has been placed solely on the shoulders of the fishers.

Thank you.