

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

**April 14, 2016, Vancouver, WA**

Good day members of the Council. My name is Wilbur Slockish. I am a member of the Yakama Nation and a treaty fisher on the Columbia River.

I am here to provide testimony on behalf of the four Columbia River Treaty Tribes: the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce Tribes.

As the Council finalizes the ocean fishery recommendations for this year, we would like to share some of our perspectives. The rights retained by the Tribes over 100 years ago form the key to managing these fisheries. Non-treaty fisheries do not have superior rights to tribal fishing. By established case law, Tribal fisheries are to be the last ones constrained. When these rights are respected, we work well together and both the treaty and non-treaty fisheries as well as the fish do better. As we work on salmon recovery together, all of our fisheries will be better in the future.

We have shared some of our ideas on how we think fisheries should be managed before and think that with the significant limits being placed on ocean fisheries this year, it is worth sharing them again. Spreading out fisheries in time and also allowing breaks for fish to pass through fisheries are useful objectives. Limiting fishing to less than seven days per week is one way to do this. Another way to control the pace of sport fisheries while allowing reasonable opportunity to catch fish is to use a one and done rule. We think keeping the first fish you catch and being done for the day may often end up with lower wild impacts compared to typical mark selective fisheries. We think this type of management could allow fisheries to remain open for longer periods of time.

Fishing is really about catching food to sustain us. We don't see a need or purpose to catch and release fish. Fish are not play things. The creator has provided them for our food, not for our fun. We just do not understand why people would want to catch and release fish just for recreation.

We also remind people of the need to continually focus on improving fish habitat. Human caused climate change is already affecting the ocean. The large numbers of sea lions in the Columbia River is one indication that conditions are not right in the ocean. Addressing climate change related ocean conditions will be exceptionally difficult. But we can address many of the freshwater and estuarine conditions. One way to focus attention on habitat is to understand that fish have the real senior water rights provided by the creator. The Tribes' water rights follow behind the fish.

Our rivers and streams are nurseries for our fish and need to be made productive again. We need to do much more to restore the ecosystem that the fish and tribal people depend on. Clean water is critical. All of the resources in the salmon ecosystem play a role in tribal people's lives. We are connected to the fish. We need the fish to survive and the fish now need us to help them survive.

Thank you.