

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

**April 7, 2017, Sacramento, CA**

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.

The Columbia River tribes continue to work on salmon recovery. Just recently, on March 9, the Nez Perce Tribe and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife took a historic step with the re-introduction of half a million coho smolts into the Lostine River in Northeast Oregon. This is the first time that coho have been in the Grande Ronde Basin in 31 years. In the late 1800's it is estimated that coho run sizes from the Grande Ronde Basin may have been around 20,000. The entire Snake Basin coho run was extirpated in the 1980's. It has taken a long time to finally release these fish and we look forward to the first adult returns from this release that will make their return in 2018. This effort involved cooperation that was essential by the numerous agencies along with the Umatilla Tribes, Wallowa County and local landowners. This represents a new chapter in efforts to restore coho in the Snake Basin and follows previous efforts in the Clearwater River in Idaho. These, combined with other similar hatchery restoration activities occurring in the upper Columbia Tributaries and in the Umatilla River represent significant progress in improving Columbia River coho returns. Naturally spawning populations have been established in the areas where re-introduction has occurred, and we expect future natural production in Grande Ronde. All four tribes have programs that together are working on recovering all of the species in the Columbia Basin. Besides fall chinook and coho, we have programs for spring and summer chinook as well as sockeye and steelhead.

Salmon restoration takes not only vision and will, but it takes resources. It takes a coordinated effort with state, federal and Tribal partners. Efforts such as this demonstrate the utility of using hatchery fish in carefully designed programs to support natural returns. Each hatchery program must be carefully tailored to provide an effective way to meet a variety of management and conservation objectives for each species. Therefore, co-managers need the flexibility to design and implement effective hatchery programs to meet these multiple objectives and support once again treaty fisheries. There should be no one-size fits all requirements imposed on recovery programs. The Grande Ronde coho re-introduction was planned with BPA funds and the hatchery production funding has come from both Mitchell Act and Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Funding. It is important that everyone who cares about salmon restoration continues to work together to help ensure that restoration programs are properly funded. Especially those that provide fishery benefits to treaty and non-treaty fisheries.

One of the long standing and most successful recovery efforts is the Snake River Fall Chinook program. Adult fall chinook salmon annual returns have increased from less than 1,000 adults passing Lower Granite Dam in the Snake River basin from 1975-1995 to a record count of more than 59,000 in 2014. This program began in 1995 and was the result of tribal insistence that we use hatchery fish to support rebuilding of the natural fall chinook run in areas upstream of Lower Granite Dam. While this program was born out of conflict and wasn't embraced in its early phase, it has evolved into a very complex and carefully coordinated program that has resulted in dramatic improvements in the status of natural origin fall chinook in the Snake Basin. It is yet another

example of co-management success regarding a species that supports local and coast-wide fisheries.

It is important that this program and other restoration programs continue as they have been doing in order that we will see continued progress toward recovery.

These programs have significant benefits for both the fish and for ocean and in-river fisheries. They benefit all of us.

This concludes the tribal statement.