

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

April 10, 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.

As the Council works to finalize this year's ocean fisheries, the tribes would like to remind everyone of a few issues important to the tribes.

The Columbia Basin ecosystem is out of balance. Natural and introduced predators of salmon have prospered at the expense of our fish. Predatory birds and sea lions populations in the Columbia are at much higher levels than our fish can support. Non-native fish, introduced by careless sport fishers, have greatly expanded in the reservoirs behind dams. A recent study conducted through the Pacific Salmon Commission for the Chinook Technical Committee has suggested that as many as 24 million juvenile upriver bright fall chinook were eaten by bass and walleye in the Hanford Reach and McNary Pool in 2016. While there are reasonable questions about some of the assumptions in this study, if it is even half correct, predation by non-native fish is a very serious problem and only one part of the river was examined. We simply must do more to control these animals that are damaging our fish runs. Seals and sea lions are not just a problem for spring chinook. These animals are in the river causing problems all year. They are even invading tributaries. More needs to be done to remove more of the problem sea lions. Even though these predators are just doing what comes naturally to them, their populations in the Columbia are too high and need to be controlled.

High summer water temperatures and excessive nutrients in the river have caused increases in abundance of aquatic vegetation in the Columbia, much of which is also non-native. This vegetation not only interferes with tribal fisheries, it undoubtedly impacts the food chain for our salmon and steelhead. There are also increasing numbers of introduced organisms that we know little about such as Siberian prawns. If we care about salmon and steelhead we must do more to restore a properly functioning environment for these fish. When there is poor water quality in the rivers, this water affects the ocean too.

We continue to have concerns about ocean conditions from both man-made and natural factors. While in river fisheries can respond to the actual run sizes, ocean fisheries can not. Quota levels set too high can have serious impacts on in-river fisheries and the escapement of these runs. As the Council heard in March, many of the ocean indicators for salmon remain poor. Only a few support a positive outlook. Pollution from a variety of sources and activities such as fish farming have constant negative impacts on the ocean.

The winter steelhead return to the Columbia was very poor. Our spring chinook return is starting off extremely slow. Some of this is likely due to high flows, but we are concerned about the abundance as well. Even though these stocks may not have direct relationships to the summer and fall chinook and coho runs that Council fisheries focus on, the low numbers of fish that have returned so far this year makes us worry about how well our 2017 forecasts will work. We don't want the tribal fishery to face the conservation burden alone.

This concludes the tribal statement.