

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

March 10, 2018, Rohnert Park, CA

Good day members of the Council. My name is Bruce Jim, Sr. I am a member of the Fish and Wildlife Committee of the Warm Springs Tribes 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.

In the 1850's our tribes signed treaties as sovereign nations with the United States which when they were ratified became law of the land and are protected by the Constitution. In these treaties, the tribes specifically reserved hunting and fishing rights. These rights were not bestowed by the United States, but were rights that have always been held by our tribes. These rights are meaningless if there are no fish and it is incumbent on the United States to ensure there are fish for the tribes to harvest.

The Columbia River forecasts are all below average and some of the forecasts are less than half of the ten-year average. Salmon runs are cyclical and while runs are expected to be down this year, poor ocean conditions likely remain a key cause. We continue to have grave concerns about ocean conditions resulting from both man-made and natural factors. Changing ocean conditions complicate our ability to forecast salmon returns. While in river fisheries can respond to the actual run sizes, ocean fisheries cannot. Ocean quota levels set too high can have serious impacts on in-river fisheries and the escapement of these runs.

Ocean fisheries need to be set conservatively enough to ensure even if runs come in less than forecast, that there is a reasonable escapement of Columbia upriver fish to meet treaty fishing needs. If the return of Spring Creek tules is too low, it can have adverse impacts on the treaty fishery's ability to harvest bright stock fish while meeting escapement needs for Spring Creek. We need to escape fish not only for hatcheries but to rebuild natural runs.

The Columbia River treaty tribes have worked very hard with our co-managers on efforts to restore and rebuild chinook and coho stocks which are both important to Council fisheries and tribal fisheries. One sign of our restoration successes can be seen at times like this when there is a downturn in run sizes and the upriver Columbia River stocks are still in better shape than many other stocks. While we expect the constraining stocks for ocean fisheries to be stocks other than our upriver stocks, we need to be cautious when planning fisheries.

We all need to work carefully together to ensure that fisheries are planned in such a manner that they do not force the tribal fishery to face the conservation burden alone.

This concludes the tribal statement.