

**TESTIMONY OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES
BEFORE THE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL
March 4, 2020, Rohnert Park, CA**

Good day members of the Council. My name is Bud Herrera. I am member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, a CRITFC Commissioner, and a treaty fisher on the Columbia River. I am here with Bruce Jim, Erik Holt, and Wilbur Slockish. We are here to provide testimony on behalf of the four Columbia River treaty tribes.

The Columbia River Tribes are concerned about the low numbers of Southern Resident Killer Whales. These whales are part of the natural ecosystem and their decline is a result of the lack of care we have taken to protect the ecosystem. As has been noted before, the three major factors affecting the orca population are prey abundance, boat noise, and water quality. All three factors need to be addressed to increase the orca population.

The PFMC SRKW Working Group concentrated on the question of prey abundance. There was no statistically significant relationship between chinook abundance and key biological viability parameters for the orcas.

Reducing fisheries will likely only have a marginal effect in increasing the orca population. The tribes support the concept of a minimal chinook abundance for ocean fisheries management. This not only makes sense from the perspective of addressing the needs of orcas, but the concept is consistent with efforts to increase chinook populations listed for protection under the ESA and rebuilding salmon populations to support our fisheries.

Despite the lack of a statistically significant relationship between chinook abundance and orca viability, the Columbia River Tribes support the production of additional hatchery chinook in the Columbia to increase prey abundance. The Columbia River Tribes recognize that only a fraction of the additional production will be consumed by the orcas. A portion of the additional production will survive to contribute to ocean and in-river fisheries, as well as escapement. But unfortunately, due to failures to address predation by birds and non-native fish, an unacceptably large portion of the additional production will be eaten by other predators, such as birds in the Columbia River estuary. We don't want to see any increase in hatchery production targeted for orcas simply to result in increased harvest rates in fisheries.

The Columbia River Tribes support the efforts of the Washington Legislature to fund additional hatchery production. The Columbia River Tribes also support the federal funding of additional hatchery production as well as funding for needed hatchery operations and critical maintenance.

The Columbia River Tribes also support efforts to reduce noise pollution and to improve water quality in Puget Sound. These are much bigger efforts and beyond the scope of PFMC. However, only increasing the prey base for orcas, while not addressing the other factors, will only slow the decline in the population.