



## The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

Colville Business Council  
P.O. Box 150, Nespelem, WA 99155

(509) 634-2200  
FAX: (509) 634-4116



April 5, 2020

Phil Anderson, Chair  
Pacific Fishery Management Council  
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101  
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

Dear Mr. Anderson:

The importance of salmon to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCR) and the Upper Columbia region cannot be overstated. The CTCR have participated in many salmon recovery forums, are actively engaged in salmon restoration actions and have commented in a variety of venues about the importance of the fisheries, and how they occupy a central role in the lives of the Tribal members. Salmon fisheries also form a key part of regional culture, history, and identity, and provide tremendous economic benefits.

CTCR includes 12 tribes and approximately 10,000 enrolled members. The Reservation is located at the terminus of anadromous salmon migration on the Columbia River in north central Washington. Our waters include both healthy runs of summer-fall Chinook and sockeye salmon, as well as ESA-listed stocks of spring Chinook salmon and steelhead trout. The salmon runs that used to support our subsistence and cultural needs were nearly lost and are currently a fraction of what they were, due in part to the construction and operation of the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams. The hatchery operations from the Colville Tribe's Chief Joseph Hatchery produce approximately three million (3,000,000) Chinook for the system when at full production.

The salmon runs have been decreasing significantly over the last several years, and it is becoming clear that something needs to change. The number of fish available to all of the groups and individuals who use this resource needs to be increased. One way to do this is to increase the amount of habitat available for spawning by expanding fish distribution into currently blocked areas. CTCR has been working with a variety of groups, including the Upper Columbia United Tribes, to explore the possibilities of passage over the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams, as well as reintroduction of salmonids above these dams. CTCR also worked with Governor Inslee's Southern Resident Orca Task Force and the Northwest Power and Conservation Council on its 2014 Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program, which both included support for a phased approach to the study and implementation of fish passage and reintroduction in the blocked area. PFMC had granted CTCR and our UCUT partners time to speak with you about fish passage at your April 2020 meeting, but that agenda item has been postponed due to the abbreviated format of your April 2020 meeting. We appreciate your willingness to hear more about this project and look forward to sharing our information and perspectives with you when it can be rescheduled.

Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation Comment Letter to the Pacific Fisheries Management Council

Current fisheries for CTCR are constricted to a very limited area in the Icicle River within the Wenatchee River Basin, at the tailrace of Chief Joseph Dam, and in the Okanogan River. Summer Chinook and sockeye salmon comprise the majority of our harvest and in recent years our harvest has improved from a few hundred fish to a few thousand fish each year for our Tribal membership. However, this still does not meet the cultural or subsistence needs of the CTCR. We do not have a commercial salmon harvest because the basic ceremony and subsistence needs of our Tribes are not fulfilled by contemporary salmon runs. This year's run appears to be no better.

The 2020 forecast for Upper Columbia Spring Chinook, Summer Chinook and steelhead are amongst the worst in recent decades. We recognize that bad ocean conditions are a major reason for the down turn in salmon productivity in recent years. Even so, approximately 60% of the adult summer Chinook produced in our traditional territories will be harvested before they return. We urge you to consider the needs and contributions of the CTCR and select a conservative harvest option for the PFMC fishery areas because escapement to the rivers is critical for the future of salmon populations.

The CTCR appreciates the opportunity to provide our perspective to the PFMC and we respectfully request the opportunity to share this information first hand by providing testimony at your meeting on April 5, 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rodney Cawston", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rodney Cawston, Chair  
Colville Business Council