



The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

Colville Business Council

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August 13, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Gorelnik:

Thank you for the opportunity for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCR) to present to the Pacific Fishery Management Council (PFMC) at the September, 2020 meeting regarding the importance and feasibility of reintroducing salmon into the blocked waters of the Columbia River Basin, above Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams.

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.

Since time immemorial, indigenous peoples in the Columbia River Basin lived a culture that was sustained by a healthy ecosystem. Fish were a mainstay of their diet – sustaining them physically, and spiritually. The Columbia basin tribes have suffered the loss of anadromous and other migrating fish due to dam construction and reservoir inundation since the early 20th century. The magnitude of the loss progressively increases with each successive upstream hydroelectric project. Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams completely eliminated anadromous fish runs in the upper Columbia River and forever altered the very way of life that uniquely identified and sustained the people from this region. The Kettle Falls fishery was dominated by the Colville Tribe but other tribes including the Spokane, Sanpoil, Coeur d'Alene, Kalispel and Kootenai participated and shared in this fishery. During the peak of the run the average catch per day was 1,000 salmon for the communal fisheries. Salmon reintroduction is critical to restoring indigenous peoples' cultural and spiritual values and harvest of First Foods taken through river development for power and flood risk management.

The CTCR and our partners, including the Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT), lead the effort to implement a phased approach to fish passage and reintroduction upstream of Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams. Phase 1 included a risk and donor stock assessment, evaluation of the quantity and suitability of the habitat, a summary of high head dam passage configurations at other projects and potential solutions for Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams, life-cycle modeling to evaluate the potential benefits of reintroduction scenarios and a

list of critical uncertainties to be evaluated in Phase 2. The executive summary from the UCUT's Phase 1 Report is included in the PPMC briefing book material for September 2020, and the entire report and associated supporting materials can be found on the UCUT website (<https://ucut.org/habitat/fish-passage-and-reintroduction-phase-1-report/>). The Phase 1 report helped UCUT and the region better understand the capacity for salmon production in the upper Columbia, appropriate donor stocks, disease risks and the manageability of them, available fish passage technology for both adults and juveniles, and most importantly, that restoring salmon to this habitat will deliver cultural and economic benefits for all. The life-cycle modeling from Phase 1 investigations showed potential for this effort to increase salmon runs in the ocean by tens of thousands of adult summer Chinook salmon and even more sockeye. Phase 2 includes the implementation of experimental releases to address critical uncertainties and the development of interim passage facilities to further assess the feasibility and develop and refine the cost estimates. Paramount to the Phased approach is a methodical evaluation and testing of feasibility that will be guided by scientific investigations in Phase 2. Phase 3 includes the construction of permanent juvenile and adult passage facilities and supporting propagation facilities and implementation of priority habitat improvements. Finally, Phase 4 includes monitoring and adaptive management of the program and continued habitat improvements to ensure long-term success.

As the CTCR and our partners at UCUT continue work towards anadromous reintroduction, efforts are focused on the development of a strategic implementation plan for Phase 2, while also engaging with federal dam owners and operators. Additionally, individual upper Columbia tribes have begun implementing trap and haul activities to support cultural and educational releases in powerful events reconnecting the people with salmon and salmon with their habitat. In 2019, the CTCR held ceremonies and released adult summer Chinook Salmon upstream of Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams, marking the first time anadromous salmon have swum in their historic waters in more than 80 years. These cultural events brought national media attention to the issue of salmon passage at Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams.

Numerous key partners have supported the effort to investigate the feasibility of fish passage to the blocked area including the 14 Tribes Coalition, the Regional Recommendation by the US Entity for the Columbia River Treaty, Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) and the state of Washington (both the Governor's office and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife). In its 2014 Fish and Wildlife Program and its 2020 Addendum, the NPCC prioritized researching the feasibility of fish passage and reintroduction at Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams. The NPCC received the Phase 1 report from UCUT and their Independent Scientific Advisory Board reviewed it (www.nwcouncil.org/reports/isab2019-3), resulting in a favorable review of the work completed to date and advice on next steps, which the UCUTs are taking into consideration.

The state of Washington supports fish passage and reintroduction in the Upper Columbia

CTCR Comment Letter to the Pacific Fisheries Management Council, September 2020

in several ways. Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) has been an active participant and partner with the UCUTs on this effort for many years. In 2018, the CTCR and the Spokane Tribe participated in Governor Inslee's Southern Resident Orca Task Force, and that effort resulted in a recommendation to the Governor to support the phased approach to salmon passage at Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams. In November, 2018, the Governor approved the Task Force's recommendations and the Legislature supported the recommendation by providing funding in the 2019-2021 biennial budget for WDFW to contribute to the effort.

In April 2019, I spoke briefly with you about the importance of restoring fish passage to the blocked area, and in November 2019, CCT technical staff presented the Phase 1 results to the PFMC Habitat Committee and talked with the Salmon Advisory Subpanel about the effort. The outcome of those interactions is the presentation from CTCR and our partners at UCUT to PFMC in September 2020.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our perspective on the importance of salmon to the tribes from the Upper Columbia region and to seek your support in salmon passage upstream of Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams. We ask that the PFMC offer policy support to expand salmon distribution into the blocked area of the upper Columbia and increase salmon production in the Columbia River through implementation of the Phased approach.

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