

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

March 5, 2021

Good day members of the Council. My name is James Marsh. I am the secretary of the Umatilla Tribe's Fish and Wildlife Commission, a Commissioner for the Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission, and a treaty fisher on the Columbia River. I have been asked to provide testimony on behalf of the four Columbia River treaty tribes, the Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs and Nez Perce Tribes. Our four tribes are the only Columbia Basin tribes with federally recognized treaty fishing rights. Our tribes specifically reserved these rights in treaties our tribes signed with the United States in the 1850's. These rights are useless if there are no fish to catch.

Because of development in the Columbia basin, there have been terrible losses to our salmon resources and the promises for mitigation and restoration have not been fulfilled. We remind the Council of these losses so that, as the Council proceeds with developing options for ocean fisheries, we may concentrate on promises made to the tribes, the requirements to fairly share fishery impacts, and of the need for all of us to take actions to restore and rebuild salmon runs.

We have specific comments on three stocks that are important to Council fisheries. First, the Spring Creek Hatchery tule stock has another low forecast this year. Not only is the low forecast a concern, but this stock has been over-forecasted in four of the last five years. In years with an over forecast, the average was nearly 50%.

We also have concerns about the pool upriver bright (PUB) chinook stock. We are forecasting a below average return for this stock, as well. The PUB stock which is dominated by production from the Little White Salmon National Fish Hatchery is a very important stock for both the mainstem treaty fishery as well as terminal fisheries. This program also provides broodstock for a number of other important hatchery programs. In recent years, we have faced challenges with meeting fishery and return objectives for this stock.

The Columbia River coho forecast is very high. There is a history of wide variation between coho forecasts and actual returns. The way the forecast is presented as a pre-harvest ocean abundance estimate can also be confusing for fishers to interpret considering other Columbia River salmon forecasts are river mouth forecasts. We urge a great deal of caution in setting ocean fisheries based on this forecast. The run could easily be less than forecast, possibly by a significant amount. We would also support a review of the forecast methodology and consideration of possible alternate forecast methods. We remind the Council of the requirement in the *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement to pass 50% of the upriver coho to Bonneville Dam. The tribes have been working hard to rebuild upriver coho runs and we want to ensure that harvest does not affect our rebuilding efforts.

While in-river fisheries can and do manage on actual run sizes that are updated in-season, the ocean fisheries cannot do this. When the forecasts are too high, there is a risk that the ocean fisheries could over-harvest this stock or potentially other stocks. A low return to the river for this stock complicates the management of our in-river fisheries as we attempt to ensure that we meet the hatchery broodstock objective. Given the low forecast that may lead to challenges in meeting hatchery broodstock needs and the track record of over-forecasting, we ask the Council to use

caution in considering fishery impacts to this stock.

Lastly, we want to remind the Council of the stress that the Columbia Basin hatchery system is under due to aging infrastructure, deferred maintenance and water supply issues. The hatchery system was developed to provide mitigation for losses due to the development of the basin and many programs are currently part of our restoration activities supplementing natural runs and re-introducing fish into areas where fish have been lost. However due in part to problems with the facilities, we are often failing to produce the targeted number of fish. Additionally, many of the hatcheries were built in the lower Columbia when they should have been built in the upriver areas where the fish were from. We will need to do a great deal of work together to address these problems. Hatcheries continue to be critical in mitigating for lost production, reintroduction efforts and supplementation of weak runs as part of rebuilding efforts.

This concludes the tribal statement.