



The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
Colville Business Council
P.O. Box 150, Nespelem, WA 99155

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



March 4, 2022

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

Dear Mr. Gorelnik:

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 and management forums, are actively engaged in salmon restoration actions, and have commented in a variety of venues about the importance of the fisheries, and how salmon 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 to the Pacific Northwest Region.

CTCR includes 12 tribes and approximately 10,000 enrolled members. The Colville Indian 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. Many salmon runs have decreased 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 increase. One way to do this is to increase the amount of habitat available for spawning by expanding fish distribution into currently blocked areas. In the past we have presented information about salmon reintroduction to the blocked area upstream of Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams to your Council, the Salmon Advisory Subpanel, and the Habitat Committee. The PFMC issued a letter of support in March 2021 wherein you indicated an interest in hearing more about the effort as it progressed. The CTCR and our partners at the Upper Columbia United Tribes have made considerable progress in the development of a Phase 2 implementation plan and we would like to share information about that progress with you at a future meeting in 2022. Please let us know which PFMC meeting would work best for providing that information.

Current salmon fisheries for CTCR are constricted to a very limited area in the Wenatchee River, 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 ceremonial and subsistence

needs of our Tribes are not fulfilled by contemporary salmon runs. The low returns of spring Chinook in 2021 limited the opening of a fishery on our reservation and the forecast for 2022 is no better. When there is little to no harvest of spring Chinook for the CTCR it is a critical impairment to our ceremonies and subsistence. The lack of spring Chinook also elevates the importance of summer Chinook to our people.

The 2022 forecast for Upper Columbia Summer Chinook is 57, 500, which is very similar to the actual returns from 2021 and the average returns over the last 20 years. As the results of the ocean harvest modeling are not yet available, we cannot calculate the range of potential CTCR harvest allocations based on the 2022 pre-season forecast at this time. We anticipate that the CTCR harvest allocation will be approximately 3,000 summer Chinook, which will not meet the needs of our 10,000 members. Additionally, the 2021 returns were approximately 28% lower than the pre-season forecast and if this occurs in 2022 the spawning escapement and harvest opportunities in the Upper Columbia region will be substantially decreased. Therefore, we urge you to proceed with caution and take a conservative approach when developing and selecting an ocean harvest option for the PFMC fisheries.

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 virtual testimony at your meeting in March 2022.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andy C. Joseph".

Andy Joseph, Chair
Colville Business Council