

**Statement by the Columbia River Treaty Tribes  
to the Pacific Fishery Management Council  
SeaTac, Washington**

**March 6, 2023**

Good day members of the Council:

My name is Bruce Jim, Sr. and I am the chair of the Warm Springs Fish and Wildlife Committee and a Commissioner for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. I am here today to provide a statement on behalf of the four Columbia River Treaty Tribes; the Umatilla, Warm Springs, Yakama, and Nez Perce Tribes.

The Columbia River Tribes and the Salmon have existed together and depended on each other for thousands of years. We cannot exist without each other. We depend on fish to meet our religious, cultural, subsistence and economic needs. In the 1850's we signed treaties with the United States. Within these treaties we specifically retained the rights to hunt, fish, and gather food throughout all of our usual and accustomed areas. We reserved these rights for our future generations. The licensed privilege of fishing by non-Indians cannot supersede our rights. Treaty rights held by tribes are "the supreme law of the land" under the supremacy clause of the U.S. Constitution. The language of tribal treaties must be understood as bearing the meaning that the tribes understood it to have.

As the government developed the hydro-system in the Columbia, the United States made promises to the tribes that there would always be fish for the tribes. These promises have not been kept, but we are continuing to work to ensure we have fish for the future.

The dams were built on historic fishing sites and village sites. The dams and flooding also covered spawning areas. Besides dams, there have been many other kinds of development that have driven salmon populations down. The government has never fully made up for these losses. These are some of the sacrifices we have made.

We come to you today to provide some of our thoughts on the Council's process as it makes recommendations regarding the 2023 ocean salmon fisheries. Upper Columbia summer chinook, and all of the various upriver fall chinook and upriver coho stocks are fish that are both caught in PFMC fisheries and which we also depend on for our fisheries. While we are forecasting returns that are reasonably sized or at least similar to the last few years, we note that these are simply forecasts. Forecasts always have some level of uncertainty. Unlike the in-river fisheries which can be adjusted depending on the actual runs, ocean fisheries cannot be adjusted if the run sizes are different than the forecasts. This makes it especially important to set ocean fisheries cautiously. We plan on reviewing the output of the ocean models and will likely have additional comments throughout the March and April Meetings. The tribes do not want to bear the conservation burden alone and we expect ocean fisheries to do their part to ensure we have enough fish to meet our summer and fall season fishing needs.

The tribes work hard with our co-managers to recover and re-build our salmon populations. As we continue this work, it is important for all of us to manage fisheries affecting Columbia River stocks cautiously and responsibly. We must continue to make progress towards restoring salmon runs to healthy and harvestable levels.

Thank You.