

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

**March 10, 2023**

Good day members of the Council:

My name is James Marsh and I am an enrolled member of the Cayuse Nation 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.

Today is an important day for the Columbia River Treaty Tribes. Sixty-six years ago, when the gates of The Dalles Dam closed at 10 a.m. on March 10, 1957, the falls were flooded in less than five hours, forming what is today called by the Army Corps of Engineers - Celilo "Lake". This represents possibly the most famous act of destruction of a tribal fishing site in the Columbia Basin. When the falls were inundated it not only destroyed the fishing site but impacted the tribal people's way of life and economic system that had been in place for over 10,000 years. Celilo may be the most documented, but it represents only one of a long list of fishing sites, spawning beds, villages, and burial grounds, and that have been destroyed since the 1800s. This destruction has impacted both salmon and the spirit of tribal people. Much of this destruction cannot be quantified.

As the Council prepares to finalize options for the 2023 ocean fisheries, we would like to remind people that most of the difficulties in setting reasonable fisheries are a result of the destruction done to habitat over the last 218 years along with the introduction of non-native species. Many of these species thrive in the unnatural habitats created by these dams. We are now faced with damaged ecosystems that are put at further risk from climate change which brings higher water temperatures and weather extremes.

Improving ecosystems in ways that can withstand a changing climate is extremely challenging work, but the tribes have willingly engaged and led many habitat projects. Besides habitat restoration projects and developing ways to appropriately utilize hatchery production to boost salmon numbers, we also have much work to do to address the impacts of predation by birds, sea lions, and non-native fish. Bird predation remains a very serious issue that affects all of the Council-managed salmon stocks. Our tribes seek support from other agencies for tribal research and management efforts on avian predation. Even though continued research is needed for monitoring, we already know enough to state that action is needed now. NMFS should also be giving more support to these efforts as birds are impacting ESA listed fish.

Our governing bodies believe that the USFWS should be directed to provide greater support for bird management to protect listed and unlisted stocks of Columbia Basin anadromous fish. This has been challenging as USFWS has a mandate to conserve both fish and birds. However, since avian predators tend to have very healthy populations and most fish stocks do not, we think it is an easy choice for the USFWS to shift their balance to be less protective of birds and more protective of fish. The Fish and Wildlife service needs to also remember that as part of the Federal Government, they have a mandate to protect tribal treaty rights and our food. Birds are native species, but their populations and opportunities for predation have been enabled by the

destructive actions affecting the ecosystem. Some birds like white pelicans were only occasionally present in places like Moses Lake and now they are present throughout most of the river.

Besides birds, non-native fish such as walleye, bass, northern pike, and shad all represent significant threats to salmon. We must work to re-balance our damaged ecosystems and reduce predator populations. Resolving the predation of tens of thousands of smolts each year would have a positive impact on adult salmon returns. This in turn would provide benefits to all of us.

This is just one of the many areas we need to continue to work on if we expect to have salmon recovery and meaningful fisheries in the future.

Finally, we have been listening to the proposals for offshore wind development over the course of this week. All energy development requires water, air/wind, or sun and it's usually on fishing, hunting, or food gathering areas. Our experience with clean, renewable energy is in the form of hydroelectric dams along Columbia and Snake rivers, and we see the impact that those have had on salmon and steelhead and treaty fisheries and resources. We support the NCAI resolution that requests DOI and BOEM to reconsider how to do offshore wind development. The climate is changing which affects environmental conditions, increases uncertainty, and could contribute to unfavorable conditions that impact upwelling and other natural processes which the Columbia Salmon rely on.

We will continue to review the output of the ocean models and we will also be tracking the planning of the in-river fisheries. We remind the Council that one of our objectives in this process is to ensure that treaty fisheries can access as much of our 50% of the harvestable surplus as possible and meet escapement needs. We expect both ocean and non-treaty Columbia River fisheries to be planned in ways that do not adversely affect our efforts to access as much of our share of the harvest as we can.

Thank You.



This photo is a dry shed at Celilo before the falls were destroyed.