

**Statement by the Columbia River Treaty Tribes
to the Pacific Fishery Management Council
Foster City, California**

April 6, 2023

Good day members of the Council:

My name is Erik Holt and I am the chair of the Nez Perce 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.

Our four tribes all have federally recognized treaty fishing rights in all of our Usual and Accustomed fishing areas. The courts have repeatedly upheld our rights to this resource. We depend on these fish for our cultural, spiritual and economic needs. These fish are part of our first foods which have sustained us throughout history.

As the Council finalizes the package of 2023 ocean salmon fisheries, we would like to remind the Council of some of our concerns. Salmon face many obstacles throughout their lives from avian predators and dams when they are juveniles, to poor ocean conditions, to sea lions, warm water in rivers and mark selective fisheries when they return. This is all before they reach our tribal fishing areas and their spawning grounds. These obstacles are largely due to an improperly functioning ecosystem.

Clearly it has become difficult to plan reasonable fisheries in part because of the status of so many weak stocks. We need to increase the abundance of weak stocks. We also have problems because all of our agencies seem to have to do more work to manage these fish with less resources. Funding for staff resources as well as hatcheries has not kept pace with inflation. Even with recent new funding increases to support our crumbling hatchery infrastructure the tribes do not believe this funding to be sufficient. Our hatchery programs have been short of proper funding for maintenance and upgrades for years. We not only have to struggle for proper funding, but we have to struggle against people who argue that we should not even have hatchery programs and those who bring needless litigation.

Columbia Basin hatchery programs are well managed and we modify and update programs based on current science and consideration of local needs and goals. Last year, a total of 94.3 million hatchery salmon and steelhead were released upstream of Bonneville Dam including 42.4 million fall chinook. A substantial portion of these fish were produced from tribal and tribally co-managed facilities. Almost all of these fish were released based on the *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement and the work of all the co-managers. Many of these programs were initially proposed by the tribes. A substantial portion of the fish are released as a result of mitigation promises made to the tribes for habitat that was lost or degraded. An increasing proportion of these releases are for re-introduction and recovery programs. We must all continue to work together to ensure we have the resources to manage our fisheries along with properly funded hatchery programs and more efforts to protect and restore habitat. If we can overcome these obstacles, we can make more progress on salmon recovery and we will be able to provide better fisheries for everyone.

Thank You.