

DRAFT #2
Statement by the Columbia River Treaty Tribes
to the Pacific Fishery Management Council
Foster City, CA

April 2, 2023

Good day members of the Council:

My name is Erik Holt and I am an enrolled member of the Nez Perce Tribe 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.

As the Council prepares to finalize options for 2023 ocean fisheries, our tribes are just beginning to celebrate the new fishing year. We honor the return of the salmon with ceremonies and feasts in each Home, also known as Longhouses, as the fish move upstream. These ceremonies maintain the connection with our sacred foods and water, which are critically important to our spiritual needs, and provide the basis of our efforts to restore, rebuild and manage our fish.

The states of Oregon and Washington have had increased difficulty in projecting impact rates in some lower Columbia River fall fisheries, which can result in imprecise management. In reviewing ocean model outputs and lower Columbia River fisheries that share ESA limits with the ocean fisheries, it is clear that Lower River Hatchery fall chinook management can indirectly impact our treaty fisheries. This is because lower river mixed stock fisheries also harvest upriver stocks that we depend on. Mark selective fishing in the fall has made estimating stock composition more difficult and less precise due to the many different unclipped stocks that are released. Uncertainties in estimating LRH impacts also affects ocean fisheries because they share the same ESA limit.

One possible action that may help resolve some of these issues would be to implement a lower river test fishery in the fall. The states have used tangle net gear for test fishing for many years in the spring. Test fishing is also already a part of Puget Sound recreational fishery management. Test fishing provides data on stock composition and clip rates that can ground truth creel surveys. Test fishing provides an opportunity to collect genetic samples that would provide much better estimates of the stock composition. The cost for a test fishery would also be moderate and would benefit both ocean and in-river fishery management. The Columbia River Treaty Tribes urge the states of Oregon and Washington to consider a lower river test fishery in the fall.

We also remain very concerned about mark selective fishing in areas where there are large numbers of sea lions. We are concerned that released fish may be easier for sea lions to prey on compared to fish that have not been handled and released.

As we continue to track the process this week, we remind the Council that our main objective is to ensure that our treaty fisheries can access as much of our 50% of the harvestable surplus as possible and meet hatchery broodstock and natural escapement needs. We expect both ocean and non-treaty Columbia River fisheries to not adversely affect our access to as much of our share of

the harvest as possible. We do not want to be faced with an unfair share of the conservation burden. Please consider these goals as you work through the season setting process this week.

Thank You.