

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

March 7, 2024

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 with Wilbur Slockish from the Yakama Nation and Ashton Picard from the Nez Perce Tribe. 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 tribes have relied on the salmon resource since time immemorial. We have always lived with and managed the salmon which is a cornerstone of our culture and spirituality. In the 1850's our tribes signed a series of treaties with the United States in which we specifically retained the rights to hunt and fish and gather food in all of our usual and accustomed fishing areas.

We come to you today to provide some of our thoughts on the Council's process as it makes recommendations regarding the 2024 ocean salmon fisheries. Upper Columbia summer chinook, all of the various upriver fall chinook, and upriver coho stocks are fish that are caught in PFMC fisheries. These stocks migrate through our waters and are also what we fish on. The 2024 forecasts are mixed. Some stocks have better forecasts than last year and some are less than last year. None of the forecasts are for very large returns. We understand these are just forecasts - paper fish - and there is uncertainty. In-river fisheries adjust to the actual returns, however, 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 will review the output of the ocean models and will likely have additional comments throughout the March and April Meetings. The tribes do not want to continue to bear the conservation burden alone.

The goals stated in the *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement are to rebuild weak runs to full productivity and fairly share the harvest of upriver runs between treaty Indian and non-treaty fisheries both in the ocean and in the Columbia River Basin. As the Council develops the 2024 ocean fishing plans, we will be reviewing the proposed fisheries to ensure they meet the goals of fairly sharing harvest.

The tribes have worked hard with our co-managers in all aspects and efforts to recover and rebuild our salmon populations. But **there is an enormous amount more that we all need to do**. 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.