

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

March 11, 2024

Good day members of the Council:

My name is Ashton Picard, and I am a member of the Nez Perce Tribe Executive Committee and a CRITFC Commissioner. 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.

In the 1850's when our tribes signed treaties with the United States, we not only explicitly retained our historic rights to hunt and fish in all of our usual and accustomed fishing areas, we received many promises from the federal government. Almost immediately many of these promises began to be broken as our land was taken and developed. Our resources were destroyed and our villages and fishing sites were flooded. With the development of the Columbia River hydro-system we were explicitly promised that the losses from the hydro-system would be made up for with hatchery fish. We were told that we would always have plenty of fish – that the government would supplement and rebuild populations. In part because many hatcheries were built downstream of Bonneville and in part because our hatchery programs have never had adequate operational and maintenance funding, we still don't have enough fish and our hatchery system has fallen into dramatic dis-repair. Many facilities are using badly outdated technology and equipment.

While we have never believed that it was our responsibility to do so as we did not cause these problems, we have willingly stepped up to work on salmon recovery and push for new and better hatchery programs that help restore and reintroduce natural runs. We work together with our co-managers to seek funding to improve and upgrade hatchery facilities. We are pleased that we have received some new federal funding that is being used for badly needed hatchery repairs. And we look forward to implementing the new Presidential Agreement on the Columbia Basin Salmon Restoration Initiative that was signed by our four treaty tribes and the States of Washington and Oregon. But the funding especially for hatcheries is still nowhere close to what is really needed. We hope you will all continue to work with us to get the funding that is needed for repairing hatcheries, restoring habitat, removing more dams and addressing our problems with avian predators.

We have been reviewing the model outputs for the ocean fishery options. So far, we have not seen anything in the model outputs that by itself causes serious concerns. But we do have ongoing concerns about the possible effects that differences in the forecasts and actual returns might produce on ocean fishery catches of our stocks. The complex mix of stocks and fisheries in different areas is a concern to us if the actual abundance of fish is widely different than forecast. The BPH Spring Creek tule stock is an example of a stock with relatively poor forecast accuracy. This is a stock that is very important to both ocean and in-river fisheries. We have faced problems with this stock in the past and been left facing the brunt of the conservation burden dealing with it. This stock is a prime example of why we need to continue to be very cautious in planning ocean fisheries.

Thank You.