



The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation

Colville Business Council
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March 21, 2024

Agenda Item E.2.e
Supplemental Tribal Report 1
April 2024

Brad Pettinger, Chair
Pacific Fishery Management Council
7700 NE Ambassador Place, Suite 101
Portland, Oregon 97220-1384

Re: Pacific Fisheries Management Council Meeting April 2024

Dear Mr. Pettinger

The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation ("Colville Tribes") is a confederacy of twelve (12) tribes whose traditional and aboriginal territory covers much of eastern Washington and extends into Canada. Like most tribes in the Northwest, the Colville Tribes are a salmon people, and the importance of salmon to our way of life cannot be overstated. The Tribes that make up the confederacy all have ceremonies, practices, and language for the salmon, regardless of which of the three language groups the tribe spoke.

The Colville Tribes' reservation is at the terminus of the anadromous salmon migration on the Columbia River in North Central Washington. We enjoy federally recognized and protected rights in fisheries managed by the Pacific Fisheries Management Council ("PFMC") on our reservation, adjacent to our reservation, and off reservation in our traditional, aboriginal, and ceded territories. We rely on the salmon harvest and do not have a commercial fishery because the ceremony and subsistence needs of the Colville Tribes' and its members, are not being met. The Colville Tribes has approximately 9500 members, and the allocation in recent history has been well under one fish per member for the entire year. This year's pre-season salmon run projections and the resulting harvest allocation for CTCR are not going to change this. It is extremely unfortunate that contemporary salmon runs do not adequately support the harvest needs of the tribes and the escapement needs of the fish populations. The CTCR are doing our part with programs to improve habitat, raise hatchery fish, and expand the distribution of salmon to their historic production areas.

In March 2024, Colville staff participated in the PFMC meetings and provided a report and testimony to your Council. At that meeting it was reported that non-Indian ocean harvest alternatives had a total allowable catch of between 72,000 and 85,000 Chinook which would remove between 2,800 and 5,800 Upper Columbia Summer Chinook. The difference between these ocean harvest options is 3,000 fish, which could make an important difference to our hatchery brood collection efforts and spawning escapement to local tributaries. Therefore, we recommend you proceed with the most conservative ocean fishing alternative that is possible, or shift the ocean fishery impacts away from the early season and away from the Columbia River.


Although your reports and aggregated metrics may suggest that Upper Columbia Summer Chinook are consistently meeting escapement and are not overfished, there are several problems

with that assessment. The escapement objective for Upper Columbia Summer Chinook in your Fish Management Plan is 12,143 to Rock Island Dam (Table 3-1, page 23). Your escapement objective is from the 1990's and it ignores the most recent two decades of contemporary salmon runs in which Upper Columbia Summer Chinook have shown much higher productivity. For example, your Pre-Season Report 1 (Table II-8, Page 41) shows that the lowest return year since 2008 was over 34,000 fish (2019), and that was the year that the pre-season high ocean harvest alternative resulted in a negative harvest allocation for the Colville Tribes. Second, some tributary streams such as the Okanogan, Similkameen and Wenatchee Rivers often have high temperatures and increased pre-spawn mortality, so escapement to Rock Island Dam is not a good measure of the number of fish needed to supply fish for hatchery programs and the spawning grounds. Third, hatchery programs have changed in recent years and those changes are not reflected in your escapement estimates in the Fish Management Plan. We realize that you may defer to an alternate escapement objective provided via the US v. Oregon process, but that is not reflected in your Fish Management Plan or your pre and post season reports (*Review of 2023 Ocean Salmon Fisheries, Escapement and Management Performance, Page 43*)(*2024 Pre-season report, Stock Forecast and Status, page 20*).

Unfortunately, many local populations including Okanogan River Summer Chinook are routinely not meeting biological objectives and in recent years the Colville Tribes have had to forego harvest opportunity to meet hatchery broodstock objectives. In our March report we mentioned a fall flood that forced the early release of Summer Chinook from the three acclimation ponds in the Okanogan and Similkameen Rivers. Due to the poor survival of outmigrating smolts and zero PIT returns for 3 year olds in 2023 the Colville Tribes is considering local fishery restrictions that will further limit harvest opportunity, and we have asked the State of Washington to respond accordingly for their terminal area sport fisheries. We believe it is important to share these details with the PFMC so everyone understands that sacrifices are being made in many local areas and for you to better understand our recommendation to select the most conservative ocean fishing alternative. The Colville Tribes are concerned not only about the current stakeholders, but also the future generations who share in this resource.

I appreciate your time and consideration, as well as the opportunity to provide the Colville Tribes' perspective. We look forward to speaking with you and testifying at the April 2024 PFMC meeting.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:


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Jarred-Michael Erickson, Chairman
Colville Business Council
Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation