

**Statement by the Columbia River Treaty Tribes  
to the Pacific Fishery Management Council  
Vancouver, WA  
March 11, 2025**

Good day members of the Council:

My name is Wilbur Slockish Jr, and I am a member of the Yakama Nation and a Commissioner for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Our four tribes have continued to meet through the PFMC process this week. I am here with Bruce Jim Sr today to provide a statement on behalf of the four Columbia River Treaty Tribes: the Umatilla, Warm Springs, Yakama, and Nez Perce Tribes.

The early spring is the beginning of our fishing year as the first salmon begin to return to our homelands. We begin the year with important ceremonies in which salmon represent the most important of our First Foods. These ceremonies maintain our connections to our spiritual lives and connections to our resources and our environment.

Yesterday was the 68<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the flooding of Celilo Falls as the gates were closed on The Dalles Dam. These anniversaries are always a day of sorrow for our tribes. It was the loss of the most well known and arguably the most important of all of our fishing sites. Unfortunately, it was just the loss of one of innumerable fishing sites and village sites as so called “development” has occurred throughout the basin. We point this out to remind people of the losses we have endured but also help remind people of our needs to rebuild and restore our resources. This is really why we come to speak to you today.

As the Council finalizes its ocean salmon fishery management alternatives for public review, we have a few comments. We have been reviewing the ocean salmon fishery options with an eye to ensure compliance with the *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement and also to ensure a fair sharing of the resources. Our tribes are entitled to 50% of the harvest numbers of fish returning to or passing through our Usual and Accustomed fishing areas. The federal courts have determined that impacts south of the US/Canada border count towards these allocations. The ESA constraints on Snake River fall chinook limit both the treaty and non-treaty fisheries’ ability to catch 50% of the harvestable numbers of fall chinook. However, the modeling results to date indicate that the combination of ocean and in-river non-treaty fisheries results in a catch expectation on the Upriver Bright stock that is less than the expected allowed treaty harvest. We have yet to compute this sharing for the other upriver fall stocks and will be working on these calculations. For upper Columbia summer chinook, the three options along with expectations for in-river fisheries all produce an expected escapement past fisheries of 29,000 fish. This meets the objectives of the *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement in order to achieve a 20,000 spawner and hatchery broodstock goal. For coho, the options have the expectations of passing at least 50% of the upriver coho to Bonneville Dam which is also a requirement of our Management Agreement.

But while the fishery options to date appear to meet the letter of our Management Agreement requirements, do not take this as our agreement that the ESA limits on treaty fisheries are fair, or that mitigation for lost production is nearly adequate. Our tribes still face an unacceptable conservation burden as runs continue to languish at low levels while the benefits of hydropower, irrigation, transportation, logging, mining, and other activities that impact our waters are enjoyed

at the expense of the fish runs and our tribe's treaty reserved rights. Predatory fish and birds as well as sea lions have also benefited from the changes to the ecosystem that have adversely impacted salmon. Even the timing and intensity of non-treaty fisheries can affect the passage of fish into our fishing areas. The United States made promises to produce salmon and ensure there would always be fish to catch, but these promises have not been fulfilled. We still have enormous work to do to address these problems and make our management systems truly fair for tribal people and truly responsive to the needs to rebuild and restore our salmon and steelhead runs to healthy and harvestable levels. Not only now but for our future generations.

Thank You and we look forward to talking with you more in April.