

**TESTIMONY OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES  
BEFORE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

**March 14, 2018, Rohnert Park, CA**

Good day members of the Council. My name is Bruce Jim, Sr. I am a member of the Fish and Wildlife Committee of the Warm Springs Tribes and a treaty fisher on the Columbia River. I am here to provide testimony on behalf of the four Columbia River treaty tribes: the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce Tribes.

Before you on the screen is a map of the Columbia Basin. It is a very large basin that includes parts of two countries and seven states and is nearly 260,000 Square Miles in total area. Historic salmon returns have been estimated to be at least 12-16 million fish per year, but according to tribal history the runs were much larger.

The Columbia Basin is now heavily impacted by dams, agriculture, mining, forestry and urban development which act to limit the fish runs, but the basin still produces very large numbers of fish. As the Council considers difficult choices in establishing options for ocean fisheries, we thought it appropriate to remind the Council both of the importance of fish produced from the Columbia and of efforts made by all the tribes to rebuild salmon runs and ensure fish are produced that can be harvested.

In the late 1970's and early 1980's the fall chinook passage at McNary Dam dropped to very low levels with a fall chinook count of less than 22,000 in 1982. The average count in the past 10 years was over 250,000. The tribes were instrumental in arguing for increases in hatchery production and changes in Hanford Reach water management such as the Vernita Bar Agreement. If the tribes had not been successful in advocating and working for the Hanford reach fall chinook, part of the URB run, the URB's would not be the major producer of natural origin fish that they are today.

Our four treaty tribes have continued to work for improving our fish runs. The tribes worked extremely hard to get the co-managers to establish the Snake River fall chinook supplementation program. For example, Snake River wild runs have gone from a return of 78 natural origin fish in 1990 to an average annual return of 10,000 natural origin fish over the past 10 years. Because of the success of using hatchery fish to supplement and improve the status of natural origin fish, Snake River fall chinook are no longer driving ocean fishery management. The tribes were responsible for programs to re-establish coho in up-river areas where they had totally or nearly disappeared. Coho counts at McNary dam averaged less than 400 in the early 1980's and averaged over 28,000 in the past 10 years. The tribes continue to make efforts to increase coho returns which help rebuild natural runs and support fisheries.

Almost all current upriver hatchery programs are co-managed through the *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement. Currently, upriver hatchery programs produce about 41 million fall chinook, over 3 million upper Columbia Summer chinook, and over 8 million coho. This compares to production downstream of Bonneville of around 28 million fall chinook, no summer chinook, and around 12 million coho. It is also greater than the Puget Sound hatcheries which released approximately 22 million chinook and just under 7 million coho in 2017.

The Columbia River treaty tribes have been at the forefront of work to develop supplementation programs which responsibly use hatchery fish to help restore natural spawning populations. These programs have shown benefits in many areas. And when used carefully, hatchery fish can be used to

support natural runs in ways that do not put wild fish at risk. This compares to areas in the lower Columbia where weirs have been constructed to specifically prevent fish like lower river tules from spawning naturally. We are frankly not surprised that there has been little progress toward recovery for many stocks which are not allowed to use hatchery fish as one of the recovery tools, but merely use them as a harvest tool. We think ocean fishery planning would be made vastly easier if hatcheries were allowed to play a larger role in salmon recovery.

We are not only concerned about hatchery management, but we are concerned about all aspects of recovering salmon and the other plants and animals the tribes depend on. Historically, we were able to drink the water everywhere we went. We want salmon and their ecosystem to be healthy enough that we can once again drink the water wherever we go.



Summer chinook “June Hog” caught by Bruce Jim near Boardman, OR about 10 Years ago.