

**TESTIMONY OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY TRIBES  
BEFORE THE PACIFIC FISHERIES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL  
April 11, 2019, Rohnert Park, CA**

Good day members of the Council. My name is Bruce Jim. I am the chair of the Warm Springs Fish and Wildlife Committee and a treaty fisher on the Columbia River. I am here with Scherri Greene from the Nez Perce Tribe, James Marsh from the Umatilla Tribes, and Wilbur Slockish from the Yakama Nation. We are here to provide testimony on behalf of the four Columbia River treaty tribes. Our four tribes are the only Columbia Basin tribes with federally recognized treaty rights. Our tribes specifically reserved these rights in treaties our tribes signed with the United States in the 1850's.

At the March meeting, we raised a concern about non-treaty impacts to the upper Columbia summer chinook stock in the PFMC fisheries. The treaty tribes cannot be forced to face the conservation burden alone. Option 1 from the March meeting does not currently meet the requirements of the 2018-2027 *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement. As the Council works to tentatively adopt 2019 ocean salmon management measures for analysis, the Council should adopt a set of measures which meets the requirements of the *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement. As we mentioned in March, there are both a river mouth escapement objective and harvest rate limits. Non-treaty harvest of upper Columbia summer chinook in the PFMC fisheries is counted as part of the non-treaty share and must not exceed the total allowed non-treaty share based on the run size.

We all continue to face challenges in providing reasonable fisheries this year based on the lower expected run sizes and forecast uncertainty. While some of the factors that have led to reduced run sizes include poor ocean conditions, another major problem affecting fish in the Columbia River is excessive predation by birds, non-native fish, and marine mammals. This predation is adversely impacting fish populations for both ocean and in-river fisheries.

Birds kill hundreds of thousands of salmon and steelhead smolts throughout the basin. Bird populations have been artificially enhanced through the modification of the in-river environment and the management of the hydro-system. While there have been efforts to reduce successful nesting by Caspian terns and Double Crested cormorants in the estuary in recent years, these efforts have not always been successful. Efforts to control cormorant nesting on East Sand Island resulted in dispersing cormorants upstream. Many now nest on the Astoria-Megler Bridge and when they live further upstream their diet is comprised of a larger percentage of salmonids. These species are long lived and eat smolts regardless of successful nesting. These species along with gulls and pelicans occur throughout the basin. There are large nesting colonies of birds upstream into the Upper Columbia and Snake Rivers.

Bass and walleye are two of the most damaging invasive non-native fish in the Columbia Basin. These fish consume untold millions of fry, juvenile fish, and smolts every year as well. There is now a significant risk that northern Pike may pass downstream from Lake Roosevelt. Pike can eat adult fish as well as juveniles.

We have struggled to get our federal trustees including NMFS and the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service to take the bird and non-native fish predation issue as seriously as it needs to be taken. This increases the conservation burden facing the tribes. There is much more that needs to be done especially in upstream areas to reduce predation on our fish that we work so hard to restore and manage. More action around federal dams and nesting islands needs to be taken including increased lethal control.

Seal and sea lion predation has become a year-round problem in the Columbia River. Sea lions can even be found upstream of Bonneville Dam. They prey on all species of salmonids including summer and fall chinook and coho. The existence and management of the hydro-system has benefited pinnipeds at the expense of salmon and steelhead. The Columbia River does not function like a natural system that would allow us to leave certain species “un-managed”. The tribes look forward to working with the states to implement increased management authority afforded under the new federal legislation signed into law at the end of 2018. This goes a small way to acknowledge the tribes’ historic rights as managers of this resource. We don’t know the total mortality caused by sea lions on salmon. But we do know that it reduces run sizes and has adverse impacts on our fisheries as well as the escapement of wild fish. ODFW has been removing sea lions at Willamette Falls and has already seen better passage of winter steelhead. Our tribes are committed to working cooperatively with the states in efforts to minimize predation by sea lions including maintaining and improving the program of lethal removal of problem animals. We would like to see improved trapping and lethal removal for any sea lion upstream from Bonneville Dam.

By working together to address predation, we will take one step to restore these runs that will help all of our fisheries and help the fish prosper for future generations. All the issues mentioned in this statement verify our stance that we have treaty rights to 50% of the harvestable number of fish including upper Columbia summer chinook and that is imperative to protect and restore these fish.

This concludes the tribal statement.