

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

April 15, 2019, Rohnert Park, CA

Good day members of the Council. My name is Wilbur Slockish. I am member of the Klickitat Tribe of the Yakama Nation 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.

The Columbia River tribes are facing very constrained fisheries in 2019. We expect our summer and fall fisheries to be much smaller than recent year averages. Currently, we expect to be able to harvest just over 6,000 upper Columbia summer chinook and just over 37,000 upriver bright fall chinook. Our total fall chinook harvest could be around 60,000 which is down substantially from recent years. If the runs come in less than forecast, our harvest will be restricted further. Our summer and fall chinook fisheries are managed focusing on commercial opportunities and many tribal fishers earn much or even all of their annual income from these fisheries. This year will result in hardships for many of our fishing families.

We remind the Council of Federal trust responsibilities with this summary of primary Federal Court decisions regarding Indian law:

1. Indian treaties must be interpreted so as to promote their central purposes;
2. Treaties are to be interpreted as the Indians themselves would have understood them;
3. Indian treaties are to be liberally construed in favor of the Indians;
4. Ambiguous expressions are to be resolved in favor of the Indians; and
5. A treaty is not a grant of rights to the Indians but a reservation of those rights not granted away.

We need to ensure that the tribes have the opportunity to harvest as much our share of the harvestable number of fish as we can.

We appreciate the work the Council has done to plan fisheries affecting upper Columbia summer chinook that meet the requirements of the *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement, but because the tribal fishery occurs upstream of large ocean and lower river fisheries, we need to ensure that these fisheries are managed cautiously to ensure enough fish reach the tribal fishery. The ocean fisheries will occur long before we learn what the actual run sizes are.

Today, we are including a couple of photographs which we want to share with you to show some of our history along the Columbia River. The first photo below is at Underwood at the mouth of the White Salmon River. You can see the fish drying racks where we prepared our traditional food.



Of course, this is a relatively modern photo, dating only from the 1930's just before Bonneville Dam was finished. Compared to our long history living along the Columbia and its tributaries, this is just a moment ago. But it shows some of our traditional practices. The photo shows tule fall chinook being dried.

Our tribes had village sites all along the river at each tributary mouth and at various rapids and cascades where we lived and fished. These village and fishing sites extended into the upper Columbia and Snake Rivers. Most of our village and fishing sites along the Columbia were destroyed with the construction of the dams, railroads, and highways.

The following photo shows one of the great tragedies we endured in the latter half of the 20th Century. It is the flooding of Celilo Falls. This photo was taken on March 10, 1957.



We hope these photos will serve as a reminder of the sacrifices Indian people have made as the west has been developed and degraded. We are still here and we still fish and we still carry out our traditional and spiritual practices. And we are committed to restoring salmon and steelhead throughout the Columbia Basin.

This concludes our tribal statement.