

U.S. Commissioners
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**UNITED STATES SECTION
of the
PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION**

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**Statement Submitted by
McCoy Oatman, Alternate Tribal Commissioner
U.S. Section of the PACIFIC SALMON COMMISSION
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT AND RELATED AGENCIES
On the FY 2015 Budgets for the
Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

April 7, 2014

Mr. Chairman, and Honorable Members of the Committee, I am McCoy Oatman the Alternate Tribal Commissioner for U.S. Section of the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC). The U.S. Section prepares an annual budget for implementation of the Treaty. The integrated budget details program needs and costs for Tribal, Federal, and State agencies involved in the Treaty. The tribal participation in the Pacific Salmon Treaty process is funded in the Bureau of Indian Affairs budget.

In order meet the increased obligations under the 2009-2018 Pacific Salmon Treaty Agreement the 25 affected tribes identified costs at \$4,800,000 for tribal research projects and participation in the U.S.-Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty process, an increase of \$520,000 over FY 2014 enacted level. The funding for tribal participation in the U.S./Canada Salmon Treaty is a line item in the BIA's budget under the Rights Protection Implementation, Wildlife and Parks, Other Recurring Programs Area.

Under U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service programs, the U.S. Section identified needs as follows:

USFWS participation in the Treaty process is identified at a base level of \$417,000. The Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission's Regional Mark Center receives support from the USFWS to provide data services to the PSC process. Those costs are identified at \$315,000. This funding level represents an increase of \$75,000 over FY 2012 enacted levels for the Mark Center to make up for losses from other programs and allow the Mark Center to maintain the same level of service to the US Section.

This base funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service supports critically important on-going work. The funding for Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission's Regional Mark Center is utilized to meet Treaty requirements concerning data exchange with Canada. These program recommendations are integrated with those of the state and

federal agencies to avoid duplication of effort and provide for the most efficient expenditure of scarce funds.

A copy of the integrated U.S. Section Budget Justification will be made available to the Committee. The budget summary justifies the support needed to carry out necessary functions in implementing the Treaty. Funding to support activities under the Pacific Salmon Commission comes from the Departments of Interior, State, and Commerce. Adequate funding from all three Departments is necessary for the U.S. to meet its treaty obligations. All of the funds are needed for critical data collection and research activities directly related to the implementation and are used in cooperative programs involving Federal, State, and Tribal fishery agencies and the Department of Fisheries in Canada. The commitment of the United States is matched by the commitment of the Government of Canada.

The U.S. Section of the Pacific Salmon Commission is recommending an adjustment to support the work carried out by the twenty-four treaty tribes' that participate in the implementation of the Treaty. Programs carried out by the tribes are closely coordinated with those of the states and federal agencies. Tribal programs are essential for the United States to meet its international obligations. Tribal programs have taken on additional management responsibilities due to funding issues with state agencies. All participating agencies need to be adequately supported to achieve a comprehensive US effort to implement the Treaty.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service activities are necessary so the U.S. can maintain the critical database to implement the Treaty. The work of the Regional Mark Processing Center includes maintaining and updating a coastwide computerized information management system for salmon harvest and catch effort data as required by the Treaty. This work has become even more important to monitor the success of management actions at reducing impacts on ESA-listed salmon populations. Canada has a counterpart database. The database will continue to be housed at the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission.

Mr. Chairman, the United States and Canada established the Pacific Salmon Commission, under the Pacific Salmon Treaty of 1985, to conserve salmon stocks, provide for optimum production of salmon, and to control salmon interceptions. After more than twenty years, the work of the Pacific Salmon Commission continues to be essential for the wise management of salmon in the Northwest, British Columbia, and Alaska. For example, upriver Bright fall Chinook salmon from the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River are caught in large numbers in Alaskan and Canadian waters. Tribal and non-tribal fishermen harvest sockeye salmon from Canada's Fraser River in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and in Puget Sound. Canadian trollers off of the west coast of Vancouver Island catch Washington coastal Coho salmon and Puget Sound Chinook salmon. In the Northern Boundary area between Canada and Alaska, fish from both countries are intercepted by the other country in large numbers. The Commission provides a forum to

ensure cooperative management of salmon populations. In 2008, the U.S. and Canada successfully concluded lengthy negotiations to improve this management, including the adjustments to the coastwide abundance-based management regime for Chinook salmon and a framework for abundance based management for southern Coho populations. The agreement is intended to last through 2018. The U.S. and Canada completed a revised Fraser River sockeye and pink chapter in 2013.

Before the Treaty, fish wars often erupted with one or both countries overharvesting fish that were returning to the other country, to the detriment of the resource. At the time the Treaty was signed, Chinook salmon were in a severely depressed state as a result of overharvest in the ocean as well as environmental degradation in the spawning rivers. Under the Treaty, both countries committed to rebuild the depressed runs of Chinook stocks, and they recommitted to that goal in 1999 when adopting a coastwide abundance based approach to harvest management. Under this approach, harvest management will complement habitat conservation and restoration activities being undertaken by the states, tribes, and other stakeholders in the Pacific Northwest to address the needs of salmon listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act. The 2008 Chinook agreement continues these commitments. The combination of these efforts is integral to achieving success in rebuilding and restoring healthy, sustainable salmon populations.

Finally, you should take into account the fact that the value of the commercial harvest of salmon subject to the Treaty, managed at productive levels under the Treaty, supports the infrastructure of many coastal and inland communities. The value of the recreational fisheries, and the economic diversity they provide for local economies throughout the Pacific Northwest and Alaska, is also immense. The value of these fish to the twenty-four treaty tribes in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho goes far beyond their monetary value, to the cultural and religious lives of Indian people. A significant monetary investment is focused on salmon as a result of listings of Pacific Northwest salmon populations under the Endangered Species Act. Given the resources, we can continue to use the Pacific Salmon Commission to develop recommendations that help to ensure solutions that minimize impacts on listed stocks, especially if we are allowed to work towards the true intent of the Treaty: mutually beneficial enhancement of the shared resource.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my written testimony submitted for consideration by your Committee. I want to thank the Committee for the support that it has given the U.S. Section in the past. Please feel free to contact me, or other members of the U.S. Section to answer any questions you or Committee members may have regarding the U.S. Section of the Pacific Salmon Commission budget.