

# **Committee on Resources**

## **Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans**

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### **Witness Statement**

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#### **Testimony of**

**W. Ron Allen, U.S. Chairman, Pacific Salmon Commission**

#### **before the**

**U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on**

**Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans, Committee on Resources**

**October 28, 1999**

On behalf of the U.S. Section of the Pacific Salmon Commission (PSC), I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee for this opportunity to present testimony regarding the new extensive agreement on the Pacific Salmon Treaty (PST) issues. I have been a Commissioner representing the 24 Treaty Tribes over the past four years and the Chairman of the U.S. Section of the Commission for the past year. My involvement with the Pacific Salmon Treaty extends back to 1984/1985 when we negotiated the original agreement. Prior to my appointment as a Commissioner, I served on the Fraser River Panel for eight years as a Tribal representative.

#### **Introduction**

The Pacific Northwest States and Tribes and the State of Alaska all depend heavily on the salmon resource for use by their citizens and members. In recent years, a combination of poor ocean survival, degradation of the salmon habitat and the effects of years of aggressive fishing by Canada have greatly reduced the number of chinook and coho salmon available to our fishermen. We are encouraged and hopeful that the new agreement will help reverse the declines in Pacific Northwest salmon stocks through the implementation of abundance-based management regimes that address these conservation needs.

It is very important to emphasize that new funding will be required to obtain the information needed to carry out new abundance-based management programs. Also, it must be recognized that the conservation of salmon stocks can only be achieved if their freshwater and estuary spawning and rearing habitats are maintained and improved.

The new agreement was reached over several years of intense and very complicated negotiations by U.S. Pacific Salmon Commission Commissioners, government negotiators, stakeholders and their advisors which included state, tribal and federal representatives. The agreement is based on a new set of abundance-based fishing regimes that are designed to ensure that conservation responsibilities and harvests for salmon stocks are shared in an agreed manner as run sizes fluctuate.

#### **Funding Components of the Agreement**

Since 1992, there has not been a comprehensive set of fishing regimes in place under the Pacific Salmon Treaty. This was largely due to differences in interpretations of how the *Equity Provision* of the Treaty was to be implemented. The uncoordinated fishing patterns and various incidents that occurred since 1992 did not help to conserve salmon stocks.

The agreement provides for bilateral Northern and Southern funds that will help obtain the new information required to implement new abundance-based fishing regimes and promote the restoration and enhancement of salmon stocks. The agreement recognizes that scientific cooperation between U.S. and Canadian fishery managers is key to the proper

conservation of our shared salmon stocks. This new agreement and its associated Northern and Southern funds, sets the *Equity* issue aside for the life of this agreement. Hopefully, this will allow the Pacific Salmon Commission to focus on the tasks of implementing the agreement and realizing the conservation potential it contains.

The agreement commits the U.S. to contribute \$75 million to a bilateral Northern Fund and \$65 million to a bilateral Southern Fund over a four-year period. These funds will be administered bilaterally by the Pacific Salmon Commission and the fund earnings will be used to gather information on salmon stocks needed for implementing the new Pacific Salmon Treaty fishing regimes and to take advantage of salmon restoration and enhancement opportunities.

In addition to the two bilateral funds, a grant to the State of Washington in the amount of \$30 million is needed to implement a reduction of the Washington non-Indian fleet to accommodate a reduction of the U.S. share of the Fraser River sockeye provided for in the agreement. This grant will be supplemented by at least \$5 million from the State of Washington. A grant in the amount of \$20 million to the State of Alaska is also requested. These funds will be used in Southeast Alaska to help mitigate for U.S. fishing opportunities lost in Alaska as a result of the new agreement. The total new funding needed to implement the new agreement is \$190 million.

The price is high and will be paid by both Indian and non-Indian fishermen due to a substantially reduced allocation of Fraser River sockeye and pink fish. But the Fraser River non-Indian fishermen will pay an even higher price because they have had to relinquish a significant portion (approximately 50%) of their share of Fraser River sockeye they were provided under earlier Pacific Salmon Treaty arrangements. It is this loss that must be mitigated through the grant to the State of Washington for a fleet reduction program. Also, it should be recognized that all U.S. fishermen in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska made many sacrifices necessary to secure the agreement.

### **Congressional Support for the PSC Agreement**

The U.S. Section urges the Congress to support the Administration's FY 2000 request for contributions to the two bilateral funds provided for in the agreement and the grants to the states of Washington and Alaska. The request is for a total of \$60 million of new funds. A total of \$10 million is requested for the bilateral Northern Fund and \$10 million

for the Southern Fund. For the grants to the states, \$30 million for the Washington fleet reduction is requested for FY2000 and \$20 million for the State of Alaska for chinook and coho salmon enhancement.

### **Congressional Support for On-Going Funding Commitments for PSC**

Continuation of funding for the Pacific Salmon Treaty Implementation Program (\$5.587 million) is essential to maintaining the many salmon stock assessment programs currently carried by the states of Alaska, Idaho, Oregon and Washington and the National Marine Fisheries Service. The continued funding of the Chinook Salmon Agreement in the amount of \$1.844 million is vital to state and tribal programs designed to provide better data for abundance-based management of chinook salmon stocks. These levels are the same as those appropriated in FY1999. We are also urging the continued support for the proposed funding for the Department of Interior (\$3.817 million) which includes funding for U.S. Fish & Wildlife, Pacific States and Marine Fisheries Commission and the Tribes. The Tribes are funded through the Northwest Indian Fishery Commission (NWIFC), Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fishery Commission (CRITFC), & Metlakatla Indian Community in Alaska.

The base funding through the State Department for the PSC Commission is in jeopardy because of changing resource and market conditions impacting the test fishery revenues, as well as increasing operational costs and inflation. These funds cover the costs for the PSC Executive Secretariat and PSC salary and travel expenses authorized under the Act. The Commission is concerned that despite past warnings, the U.S. and Canadian governments may jeopardize the essential role of the Executive Secretariat operations that supports the Treaty commitments. A portion of the overall budget has been paid equally by both governments and a portion has been paid through the revenues generated by test fisheries utilized in managing the PST harvest management duties for the Fraser River sockeye and pink fisheries. The decline in the resource and drop in market prices are jeopardizing these international duties.

It is important to note that the U.S. and Canada have contributed the same amount (\$800,000 Canadian currency) for the Executive Secretariat functions and duties since 1993. We are encouraging the Congress and the Administration to

seriously consider an increase of the base funding to account for these cost increases. The Administration is currently asking for \$1.835 million for FY2000, which includes the costs for the Executive Secretariat and other PSC related expenses. We believe that the adequacy of these funds will need to be addressed in the near future.

### **New Harvest Management Obligations**

With this new agreement, the U.S. finally has secured limits on Canadian mixed stock coho and chinook fisheries that should provide returns of these valuable fish to U.S. waters that are large enough to allow our managers to rebuild and recover depressed stocks and provide for substantial U.S. fisheries.

This new agreement provides new guidelines regarding how the chinook, chum and sockeye/pink fisheries will be conducted, but the coho fishery regime, as well as the allocation scheme will still have to be worked out. This process will be very difficult because Canada is adjusting to an abundance-based management approach. Upcoming meetings over the next few years will require extensive negotiations and research to verify assumptions in a new proposed management and allocation plan. It should be obvious to the outside observers that we have a great deal of work to manage, as well as the duty to ensure that the PSC process is complying with the ESA obligations.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your support for this important agreement that should improve our relations with Canada and provide the basis for rational management of our west coast salmon stocks that are subject to the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

I appreciate the opportunity to make this information available to you today. I would be delighted to answer any questions.

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