

**Testimony of Rebecca Miles**  
**Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee**  
**Vice-Chairman, Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission**

**Columbia River Hatchery Reform: What's Next**  
**March 27, 2009**  
**Portland Airport Sheraton Hotel**

My name is Rebecca Miles, I am a member of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee and the Vice-Chairman for Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission. Thank you for inviting us here today.

First of all, I want to commend the extensive effort put forth by members of the Hatchery Scientific Review Group. As all of us who are involved with salmon restoration recognize, this is not an easy issue. Our endeavors, as were those of the HSRG, involve countless hours by many dedicated, and personally committed staff. Every day, for many years, I have witnessed our tribal employees and tribal members put forth remarkable efforts to restore these fish, and to ensure that our treaty rights are as living and as valid as they were seven generations ago when we signed our first treaty with the United States. We welcome and appreciate involvement by the HSRG in this effort.

We look forward to reviewing the product developed by the HSRG. Our staff, through participation in U.S. v Oregon and the Steering Committee, have had the opportunity to “take a peek” at some of the hatchery recommendations and we will study carefully those harvest recommendations embedded in the document as well. As some of you are probably sensitive to, there have been very few recommended changes in harvest over the last 150 years that have actually been requested by the Tribes. Too often harvest recommendations have been made for the majority population, with little consideration of the tribal entities with whom that harvest is shared and guaranteed. Consequently, we will study these recommendations carefully, and consider them in light of the agreements we have recently reached in U.S. v Oregon.

The Nez Perce Tribe, perhaps more so than other entities, is dependent on hatchery programs to maintain a semblance of what the United States agreed to in its treaties. Time and man has marched on from 150 years ago, creating a situation in the Nez Perce homeland where entire runs have been wiped out – from the Clearwater, the North Fork Clearwater, Wallowa Lake, and the middle Snake River and its tributaries. Fish returning to our country have to pass eight run-of-the-river dams. Truly, the only runs that can sustain a fishery and sustain themselves in the Snake River are hatchery supported.

The Tribe will consider how recommendations made by the HSRG affect the mitigation responsibilities of hydrosystem. All of the anadromous hatcheries in the Snake River basin are mitigation facilities; they are payment of a debt which remains in place until the dams are removed. Any reduction or compromise in that debt will not be acceptable.

The Tribe plays a major role in operating and managing hatchery programs in the Snake River Basin to restore salmon and steelhead populations and provide harvest opportunities – for tribal and non-tribal members alike. The Tribe began implementing hatchery programs with new science over two decades ago by developing supplementation programs and integrating hatchery and wild fish on the spawning grounds and in the hatchery. The Tribe has successfully used hatchery programs to: reintroduce coho salmon to the Clearwater River, prevent the extirpation of ESA listed spring and summer Chinook in the Grande Ronde and Salmon Rivers, and rebuild Grande Ronde and Imnaha Chinook populations to where sport and tribal harvest has recently occurred for the first time in over 30 years. The Tribe also operates Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery – a state of the art facility using natural rearing strategies to rebuild Clearwater River spring and fall Chinook populations. As a result of our programs, returns of Snake River fall Chinook have increased from less than 1,000 to over 20,000 fish per year. From what we've seen, the HSRG report recommends some of the same principles we've built our successful hatchery programs on.

In closing, I want to compliment Representative Dicks and Senator Murray for trying to address a significant need for hatchery repair and reform. The lower river Mitchell Act hatcheries have been crying out for help for years, as has the U.S. Fish and Wildlife program

hatcheries. Any assistance from congress with the backlog of repairs needed by these facilities is sorely welcomed. The basin, its harvest agreements, and fair implementation of our treaty rights require a system of hatcheries that are functioning and work cooperatively with each other. We look to our elected leaders to understand and comprehend this interrelatedness and dependency – for as long as the dams are in place. For as long as the dams are in place.