

Testimony of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Hearing before the Senate Business and Transportation Committee
SB 256
February 15, 2017, 3pm
Hearing Room B

Good afternoon Chair and members of the Committee.

Members of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation have fished at Willamette Falls since time immemorial.

In the Treaty of 1855 between the United States and the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla tribes, our ancestors reserved for us and future generations the perpetual right to fish at all usual and accustomed fishing stations. Willamette Falls is one of those stations. We are one of two treaty tribes in the State of Oregon.

Every year tribal members from the Confederated Tribes harvest lamprey at Willamette Falls, which is one of the last strongholds of lamprey in the Columbia Basin. Lamprey are one of the most ancient of our traditional First Foods.

They are also distributed as subsistence fish to tribal elders who can no longer make the journey to Willamette Falls themselves. Lamprey are especially beloved by elders in the community as they bring back treasured memories of an earlier time. We have many oral histories that testify to the ongoing importance of gathering lamprey at Willamette Falls.

Willamette Falls is prominent in our past, our present and indelibly linked to our future cultural survival.

SB 256 creates the Willamette Falls Locks Commission, creates a program within the Oregon Business Development Department, creates an account and appropriates funds for that account to accomplish the purposes of the legislation.

As drafted, SB 256 also reserves one seat on the commission for the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon.

The tribes that retain Treaty Rights at Willamette Falls should also be included on this Commission to assist in guiding the decisions made by the State regarding Willamette Falls.

We request that SB 256 be amended to specifically identify seats on the Commission for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon.