



Statement of Gary Burke, Chairman, Board of Trustees
Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
January 28, 2019
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, Oregon

Chairs Power and Dembrow and members of the Carbon Reduction Committee:

Good afternoon. I'm Gary Burke, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Congress ratified the Treaty of 1855 between the Walla Walla, Cayuse, and Umatilla Tribes and Bands of Indians in the Washington and Oregon Territories. It is federal law, at 12 Stat. 945.

We are a sovereign and federally recognized tribal government. We are here to speak to you on a Government-to-Government basis.

The Umatilla Tribes welcome and appreciate the interest of the legislature and the governor in tackling the challenge of Climate Change.

Our Tribes are contending with Climate Change impacts. They are affecting us *now*. They will affect us *all*, in one way or another, in the years to come.

While all will feel the impacts, some—like tribal people—shoulder a greater share of the burden.

The Umatilla Tribes support state actions to address Climate Change now.

We support legislation to reduce greenhouse gases by reducing fossil fuel use and consumption.

We support legislation and policies that encourage the use of non-fossil fuels.

We support investment in cleaner and “greener” energy generation and use.

The energy landscape must be altered and transformed. But it must be done in a fair and just way that carefully considers the people and communities affected by the transition.

Tribal people are closely tied to our traditional-use lands and the waters in this State, and far beyond. So it was with our ancestors, so it will be with our children and theirs.

The air, the land, the waters—they all provide us with the First Foods that we depend on, for our lives, our spirit, our culture, our identity.

In turn, the First Foods depend on us to take care of them, so they will be here for all those who come after us.

The First Foods are required to exercise the rights we secured, forever, in our Treaty of 1855 with the United States.

Climate Change is a difficult, widespread, and far-reaching threat to our First Foods.

We are experiencing Climate Change impacts. Severe, extreme weather events tied to a changing climate continue to add up.

We've had to breathe thick smoke for weeks in the summer from raging wildfires.

High water temperatures in our mainstem and tributary rivers kill many of our fish.

Reduced snowpacks lower summer streamflows.

The ocean—where our salmon mature before returning home—is also heating up and becoming more acidic, with larger dead zones.

Climate Change and extreme weather threaten the health and well-being of our people and our communities, Indian and non-Indian alike. They create more risks—and *costs*—for tribal and local businesses and economies.

Environmental Justice principles should guide development of Climate Change legislation.

Equal protection from environmental and health hazards is necessary. There must be meaningful participation by all concerned and affected, including minority communities.

Any bill should also respect Tribal sovereignty, authority, and jurisdiction. The bill should remain consistent with Oregon laws recognizing our government-to-government relationships.

Tribal needs and values must be recognized.

Successfully integrating tribal needs and values has resulted in benefits not only to tribal people, but to the larger non-Indian community as well. Restoring harvestable salmon to the Umatilla River, after they had been extinguished for three-quarters of a century, is one example.

Tribal values have served us well since time immemorial—for thousands of years, they enabled us to take care of our First Foods.

We “managed” our “resources”—without using those modern, clinical-sounding words. We took care of the First Foods, without hurting them or our future—without hurting the climate that we all need if there is going to *be* a future.

The legislation before you this session for a Cap and Trade system can help us protect that future.

The Umatilla Tribes are committed to the process to develop and refine an effective bill. Input from Oregon businesses and rural communities should be considered. The unique risks and vulnerabilities of those east of the Cascades must be appreciated.

Remember that our oceans are closely linked with climate. Measures to protect and improve the marine environment should be part of Climate Change response efforts.

The Umatilla Tribes have long dedicated our limited resources to mitigate Climate Change impacts.

We’ve restored water and harvestable fish runs to the Umatilla River. We are working to do the same in the Walla Walla River.

We’ve repaired damaged floodplain habitat to meet ecological goals, across four river systems, under our *River Vision* guidelines.

We operate a public transit system across four counties in two states that serves people in 17 communities.

We conducted a Climate Change vulnerability assessment.

We built a highly energy-efficient tribal health clinic. We were the first tribe to enroll in the “Path to Net Zero” program with Energy Trust of Oregon. Our Yellowhawk Health Clinic was designed to cut power consumption, to be 60 per cent more energy efficient than a standard building of its type.

We've installed solar panels on tribal offices and electric-car charging stations at our resort complex.

We installed a wind turbine and solar panels at our museum.

We've helped develop a wind energy facility.

And, we're studying the feasibility of geothermal energy generation.

The Umatilla Tribes support state-wide actions to do more, such as the legislation before you this session for a Cap and Trade system.

Unfortunately, the federal government will do nothing to help us at the moment. It's up to us.

Your action is vital. Doing nothing will not protect us from the inevitable changes to come.

Human beings created the problem. Human beings must solve it.

We cannot ignore the obligation to repair the damage that has been done.

This bill acts to limit carbon emissions that threaten our tribal First Foods and our way of life.

The Umatilla Tribes support legislation to reduce the risks of Climate Change to our health, our traditions, our culture, our local livelihoods, and our economic security. We look forward to seeing the language of the bill this week and providing additional input to create a Cap and Trade program to benefit all future generations.

Thank you.