



Testimony of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
House Interim Committee on Agriculture, Land Use and Water
January 12, 2022

Good afternoon. I'm Kat Brigham, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

I have spent most of my life working on issues related to water and negotiating solutions. In my experience, there are three key principles to keep in mind.

1. It is vital that State and Tribal governments work together
2. Every Tribe's water issues are unique
3. Collaboration between multiple entities is often complex but always necessary

Whether we are keeping a State agency informed on restoration projects or flagging new issues in need of a solution, we keep the government-to-government relationship with the State of Oregon front and center. And we appreciate Oregon's commitment to do the same.

But our water needs and concerns are different from other Tribes in Oregon. Today you will hear from two other Tribal leaders about drought and managing water resources. There are some fundamental concerns we share but for the most part each Tribe has unique challenges, governmental structures and projects. Please continue to seek out input from individual Tribal governments as you are doing today.

Solutions to water issues require good communication. Typically, there are many government entities and stakeholders that need to be engaged. While the process is often complex, I assure you the outcomes are better when we work together.

Take for example our work around salmon restoration. Due to water diversions and habitat losses in the lower Umatilla River Basin, salmon runs that were once abundant, were destroyed in the 1920's. We worked with Senator Mark Hatfield, State and Federal agencies and Umatilla Basin irrigation districts to develop the Umatilla Basin Project.

Congress approved the Project in 1988 and it was completed in 2000. Three irrigation districts received Columbia River water in exchange for leaving their water rights in the Umatilla River for in-stream flows. This collaboration resulted in the most successful salmon restoration project to date in the Columbia Basin.

Now, we are building on that Project, and on the trust that has been developed among our negotiating partners. Eric Quaempts will walk you through our efforts to achieve a water rights settlement and how the State of Oregon is playing an important role.

Thank you for your time today.