MEDIA RELEASE
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Tŝilhqot’in Call for Action to Stop the Alaskan District 104 Fishery from Intercepting Critical Salmon Stocks as Pacific Salmon Commission meets

Williams Lake, B.C.: The Tŝilhqot’in Nation is calling for the Alaskan District 104 Fishery to be shut down due to conservation concerns and Indigenous priority rights for Salmon in the Fraser River. The District 104 Purse Seine Fishery intercepts salmon stocks returning to their natal streams in Canada, which includes Fraser River salmon stocks that the Tŝilhqot’in Nation relies on for food security.

Existing data from Alaska demonstrates that the fishery has significant impacts on Fraser River stocks in years of low returns, with impacts on both First Nations fisheries and conservation. During extreme conservation measures that restrict Canadian and Washington harvest, and can close even Indigenous food fisheries in British Columbia, the Alaskan District 104 Fishery continues to harvest these salmon without limit.

In 2019, the Tŝilhqot’in Nation was faced with a surprisingly low return of salmon to the Territory – and while the Tŝilhqot’in chose not to fish for their families and communities, the Alaska District 104 Fishery harvested a reported 45,000 Chilko sockeye. The Tŝilhqot’in Nation remains concerned that the 2023 Chilko sockeye return may be dangerously low. These sockeye are the offspring from the severely impacted 2019 year and the Tŝilhqot’in want these fish protected for both conservation and their priority fishery.

Today, Chief Joe Alphonse, Tribal Chair of the Tŝilhqot’in Nation Government, addressed the Pacific Salmon Commission and called for action on the Alaskan District 104 Fishery as the Pacific Salmon Commission meets this week in Vancouver, B.C. The Pacific Salmon Commission was formed by the governments of Canada and the United States to implement the Pacific Salmon Treaty. The Alaskan Salmon Fishery is currently authorized under the Pacific Salmon Treaty.

Quote:

Nits’ilʔin (Chief) Joe Alphonse, O.B.C, LL.D. (hon.). Tribal Chair, Tŝilhqot’in National Government

“What we are seeing here is nothing less than economic interests trumping major impacts to the wellbeing of the Tŝilhqot’in people. Our salmon fishery is central to our identity and our way of life. Our people rely on the annual migration of salmon to feed our families throughout the year. In 2019, for the first time in my lifetime, the Tŝilhqot’in Nation closed our sockeye fishery for conservation. With low ocean returns, and the threat of the Big Bar landslide, every fish counted. That same year, we were
shocked to learn that the Alaskan District 104 Fishery caught 45,000 Chilko sockeye, bound for our Tšilhqot’in Title lands. It’s time for the Alaskan District 104 Fishery to be shut down while we still have a hope for the rebounding of salmon populations in the Fraser River system.”

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