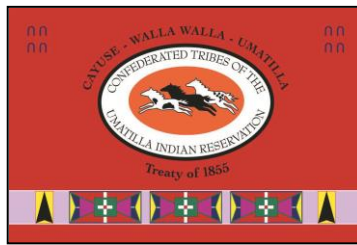


**Confederated Tribes *of the*
Umatilla Indian Reservation**

Board of Trustees



46411 Timine Way
Pendleton, OR 97801

**Testimony of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Walla Walla 2050 Legislation
Senate Bill 956**

Senate Committee on Veterans, Emergency Management, Federal and World Affairs

March 23, 2023

Chair Manning, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the Committee, my name is Corinne Sams and I am a member of the Board of Trustees for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

I am here today to ask you for your support for Senate Bill 956. This legislation will enable the implementation of the Walla Walla 2050 Plan, which we helped create in collaboration with Oregon, Washington, and basin stakeholders. This Plan is our roadmap for cooperative water management in the Walla Walla Basin.

In our language, *Walla Walla* means “land of many waters.” This refers to the abundant streams and rivers that once flowed through the Walla Walla Valley, where the Tribes gathered to fish for the bountiful runs of salmon that once returned to the Basin. These fisheries have been sacred to the culture and traditions of the Tribes since time immemorial, and are central to exercising the rights reserved to us in our Treaty of 1855.

Today, those bountiful runs are nearly gone, pushed to the brink of extinction as the over-allocation of water resources dries up our rivers and streams. Our ancestral homeland in the Walla Walla is now divided between two states, Oregon and Washington. This political boundary has prevented the management of the Walla Walla's water resources in a cooperative, holistic manner. It has rendered the Basin unable to solve the problems facing both instream flows and water users alike.

The Tribes and basin stakeholders recognize the urgent need for cooperative, bi-state water management. Indeed, we have worked together on a roadmap for achieving this shared vision in the Walla Walla 2050 Plan. The Tribes are investing in this vision already, building a fish hatchery and dedicating millions to on-going water conservation projects to restore instream flows. This approach has served us very well in the Umatilla, where the passage of the 1988 Umatilla Basin Project Act provided us with the tools necessary to solve our water challenges collaboratively.

Oregon also has invested a great deal, spending millions on projects that can restore stream flows and restore floodplain habitat. So too has the federal government and Washington, which is running counterpart legislation in Olympia as we speak. Irrigators are central to this effort, working with the states and Tribes on our shared vision of a healthy, thriving basin for fish and farms. But, unless we have the legal ability to work together and manage the watershed holistically, all these efforts will come up short.

With this legislation, we have the opportunity to achieve this vision—but we cannot do so without your help. I thank you for your time today, and ask for your support for this important bill.