Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Department of the Interior today announced a proposal to adopt new regulations governing the use of Indian government-owned fishing grounds by the Yakima, Umatilla, and Warm Springs Tribes and by other Columbia River Indians in the Pacific Northwest.

The lands affected are in Washington and Oregon, are under the jurisdiction of the Secretary of the Interior, and were made available to the Indians in lieu of fishing grounds flooded or destroyed when Bonneville Dam was constructed during the 1930's.

Need for rules to clarify use of the four replacement sites has become obvious in view of health, safety, and sanitation hazards which have developed without regulations, the Department said. The proposed regulations, about which interested persons are invited to submit written comments within 30 days after publication in the Federal Register, provide that:

Fishing from the sites on the Columbia River is restricted to enrolled members of the Yakima, Umatilla, and Warm Springs Tribes and other Columbia River Indians having treaty fishing rights at locations destroyed by construction of Bonneville Darn. The same restriction applies to the use of camping areas at the sites.

Identification cards, to be issued by the Tribes or by the Portland Area Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, are to be carried and exhibited by those entitled to use the fishing grounds.

Indians using a site must comply with tribal laws and regulations and with fishing regulations prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior. They must also observe Federal laws and applicable State laws and local ordinances which do not interfere with treaty fishing rights. Violators shall be subject to the suspension or withdrawal of use and access privileges.

The BIA Area Director's prior approval is required before trailers, boats, vehicles, or other personal property can be left at the fishing grounds. Approval is also required to build structures or fishing platforms on the sites. Such structures or platforms will be used at the owner's risk; the United States recognizes no responsibility in this regard.

Damage to Government-owned property on the fishing sites is subject to prosecution under Federal or State laws. Gambling at the sites will not be allowed. Firearms and explosives are prohibited, except those in the possession of authorized law-enforcement personnel.

Commercial purchase of fish at the sites is prohibited, except by express authorization of the BIA Area Director.

The Director will post rules governing the use of camping sites at the fishing grounds. No fee for use or access may be charged to Indians entitled to use the grounds or to members of their families.