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Media Contact: Macfarlan -- 343-9431
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Robert Schoning, Oregon State Fisheries Director, and Thor Tollefson, Director of the Washington State Department of Fisheries, conferred this week with top officials of the Department of the Interior in Washington to explore possibilities of cooperatively developing regulations that would recognize and provide for Indian off-reservation treaty fishing rights.

Governor Tom McCall of Oregon, at whose request the meeting was held, was unable to attend because of adverse flying weather.

The two state directors indicated a willingness on the part of their departments to issue regulations providing for an exclusive Indian commercial net fishery on the Columbia River above Bonneville Dam in recognition of treaty rights of certain tribes to fish off-reservation at their "usual and accustomed places."

The Department of the Interior has issued framework regulations covering off-reservation treaty fishing rights and is at present considering implementation of the framework plan by promulgation of specific regulations where necessary. Several tribes have also adopted regulations governing the fishing activities of their members.

Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall said he was encouraged by the fact that the states' proposal recognized the special treaty rights of the Indians. He told the state officials that the Department welcomes an opportunity to work closely with the states and the tribes on that basis and in choosing an approach which, it is hoped, will lead to amicable resolution of this long-standing controversy.

"The tribes, the states and the Federal Government all have responsibilities for and interest in conserving and governing the fishery resource, and a true spirit of cooperation will be required of all parties," Secretary Udall added. He stressed the necessity of involving the tribes in development of basic approaches for establishing fair, reasonable and necessary conservation regulations.

Director Tollefson noted that successful culmination of this cooperative approach to the problem on the Columbia River could lead to similar cooperation with respect to other streams in Washington where Indian tribes have treaty rights.

Interior Department officially participating in the discussions included Assistant Secretary Harry Ro Anderson, Solicitor Frank Barry, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife Clarence F. Pautzke, and Commissioner of Indian Affairs Robert L. Bennett. Also taking part were Dale M. Baldwin, Area Director at Portland, Ore" for the Bureau of Indian Affairs; Donald R. Johnson, Regional Director at Seattle, Wash., for the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries; and George Dysart, Assistant Regional Solicitor for the Department at Portland, Ore.