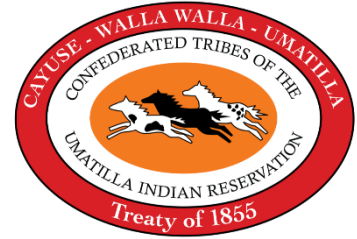


Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation **PRESS RELEASE**



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CTUIR Officials, Members Attend Lamprey Celebration

OREGON CITY – Elected officials, employees and members of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) traveled to Clackamette Park on Thursday, June 26, to attend the 2025 Willamette Falls Lamprey Celebration.

Hosted by the Yakama Nation, people from the surrounding community as well as the CTUIR, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and Nez Perce Tribe gathered to learn about and celebrate the lamprey.

“We’re here today to celebrate the return of our Pacific lamprey eels in the Willamette system here at Willamette Falls where we all have historically come to fish, trade and celebrate with other relatives of ours (Yakama, Warm Springs and Nez Perce) in the region,” said CTUIR Board of Trustees Member at Large Corinne Sams, who attended the event with fellow BOT Member at Large Toby Patrick. “This is our usual and accustomed fishing site. We’ve been coming here for millennia, and we’ll continue to come here to fish and to celebrate the return of our most ancient fish.”

For centuries, the tribes of the region have harvested lamprey at Willamette Falls. However, despite dating back approximately 450 million years, today Pacific lamprey numbers in the Columbia River and its tributaries have plummeted because of the construction of dams.

Sams, who also serves as the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) treasurer, said the CTUIR Lamprey Project plays a significant role in increasing the number of lampreys in the Willamette system, the Columbia River Basin and its tributaries.

"They do an enormous amount of work with trans-relocating these fish to areas that they've vanished from," she said. "Just yesterday, our crew, along with the other member tribes, trapped some eels at Bonneville Dam and trans-located them up to Eugene to be in the Willamette system so we always have an abundance of eels for us to harvest."

The celebration included information booths, lamprey preparation demonstrations, inter-tribal dances, speakers from the four tribes, as well as a meal highlighted by lamprey and salmon. Boat tours also gave organizers an opportunity to teach the public about why Willamette Falls is important for harvesting lamprey.

"It's important to have this celebration to honor our First Foods, to honor the return of the eel, and so in our tradition it's important to celebrate that we celebrate that and give thanks and prayers and to give some enthusiasm to those who continue to do the work every day on behalf of the tribes," Sams said. "And the significance of having it here is that it is close in proximity to Willamette Falls, the place where we do harvest eels."

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Walla Walla and Umatilla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.

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Caption1: Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Board of Trustees (BOT) Member at Large Toby Patrick speaks to the crowd at the Willamette Falls Lamprey Celebration on Thursday, June 26, in Oregon City. Standing next to him is fellow BOT Member at Large Corinne Sams. AARON WORDEN/COURTESY

Caption2: Lamprey harvesters gather lamprey on the morning of Thursday, June 26, at Willamette Falls in Oregon City. The harvested lampreys were later prepared and served during the Willamette Falls Lamprey Celebration in Clackamette Park. CTUIR

Caption3: Harvested lampreys wiggle and squirm on a boat after being harvested on Thursday, June 26 at Willamette Falls in Oregon City. They were later prepared and served during the Willamette Falls Lamprey Celebration in Clackamette Park. CTUIR