

Tribal Natural Resources Management: A report from the Treaty Indian Tribes in Western Washington 2013



“We, the Indians of the Pacific Northwest, recognize that our fisheries are a basic and important natural resource and of vital concern to the Indians of this state, and that the conservation of this natural resource is dependent upon effective and progressive management. We further believe that by unity of action, we can best accomplish these things, not only for the benefit of our own people, but for all of the people of the Pacific Northwest.”

**– Preamble to the
NWIFC Constitution**

From the Chairman



Natural resources, especially salmon, have always been the foundation of tribal cultures and economies here in western Washington. When we signed treaties with the United States, we gave up millions of acres of land, but kept what was most precious to us: our right to hunt, fish and gather in all of our traditional places. We kept these rights because these resources enable us to survive as a people, a fact no less true today than

when the treaties were signed more than 150 years ago.

Today we are co-managers of the natural resources in western Washington, but our treaty rights are at grave risk because natural resources are being damaged and destroyed faster than they can be protected and restored. This is especially true of the habitat that salmon need to thrive.

Despite massive cuts in harvest, careful use of hatcheries and a huge financial investment in habitat restoration the past four decades, wild salmon populations continue to decline along with their habitat. This trend shows no signs of improvement.

Nearshore marine habitat – especially important to young salmon – is being lost and damaged by docks, bulkheads and other forms of shoreline armoring. Forests are disappearing to development. Water quality and quantity are declining throughout the region. Polluted stormwater runoff is increasing as more of our watersheds are lost to pavement every year. All of these issues directly affect

salmon and are compounded by climate change, which disproportionately affects isolated tribal communities.

The results have been devastating. Some treaty tribes have had to give up even their most basic ceremonial and subsistence fisheries.

But there is hope.

We are encouraged by the federal government’s response so far to our call for action under the Treaty Rights at Risk initiative that we began in 2011. We are asking the federal government to exercise its trust responsibility to the tribes and take charge of salmon recovery, align its agencies and programs to be more effective, and lead a more coordinated salmon recovery effort.

Helping guide that effort is the tribes’ recently completed State of Our Watersheds report. The report examines the health of 20 watersheds in western Washington to help gauge progress and identify barriers to salmon recovery.

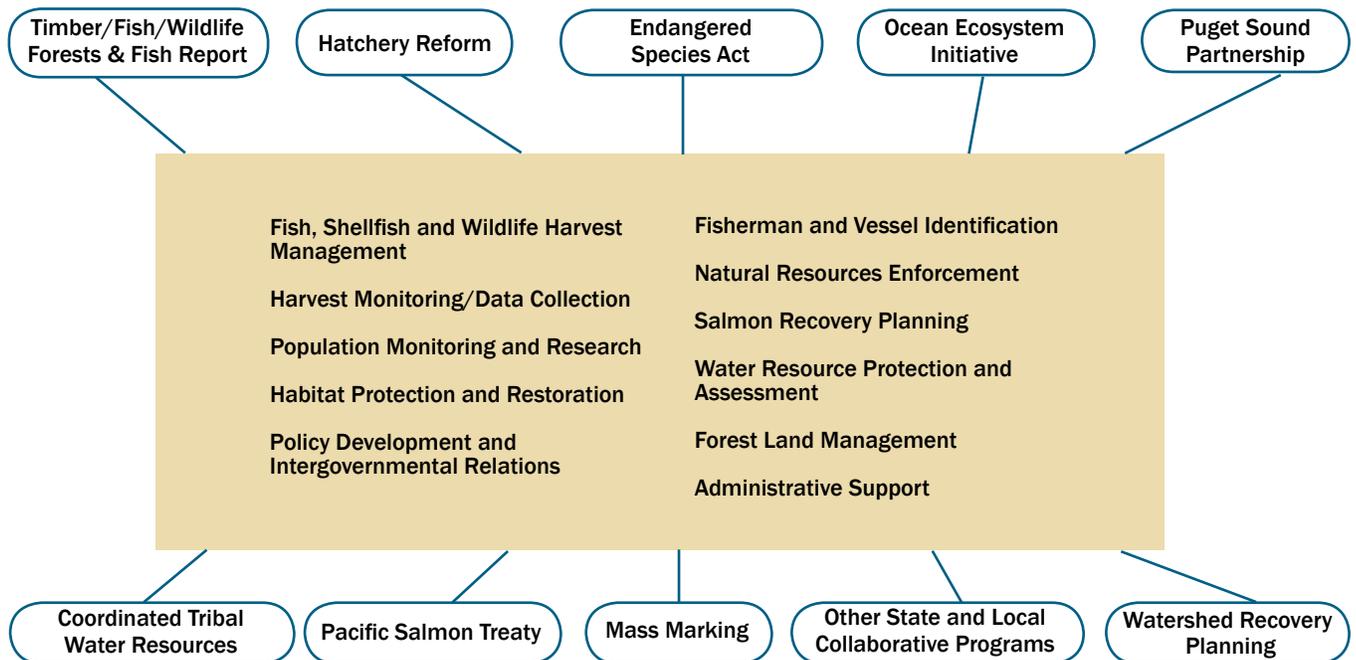
We all have made a huge investment in recovering salmon and their habitat in recent decades, but it hasn’t been enough. We must do more. That includes steps like stronger enforcement of existing environmental laws to protect salmon and putting a stop to development in river floodplains that are important to salmon habitat.

We believe that all things are connected. That means salmon and natural resources are part of us – all of us – and it’s going to take all of us to stop the loss and decline of those resources and return them to sustainable abundance.

Billy Frank Jr.
NWIFC Chairman

Tribal Natural Resources Management

Natural resources management functions and associated programs of the treaty Indian tribes in Western Washington:





Year In Review

This report offers a broad overview of some of the natural resources management issues and activities of the treaty Indian tribes in western Washington during 2012. Among the major issues were the increased degradation of salmon habitat, climate change and a state budget deficit that threatened hatchery salmon production. All of these issues put treaty rights at great risk. More information is available at nwifc.org.



Debbie Preston

A Makah tribal member shares a dance during a protocol ceremony at the 2012 Tribal Canoe Journey hosted by the Squaxin Island Tribe.

Tribes Implement Treaty Rights at Risk Initiative

The treaty Indian tribes began the Treaty Rights at Risk initiative in summer 2011 because of the decline of salmon due to ongoing loss and damage of habitat. Historically, the federal government's main response to declining salmon runs has been to restrict harvest. Before tribes can go fishing, they are required to show that their fisheries will contribute to salmon recovery under the Endangered Species Act. Those who damage or destroy habitat, however, are not held to the same standard.

The tribes are asking the United States government to take charge of salmon recovery because it has the obligation and authority to ensure both salmon recovery and protection of tribal treaty rights. The tribes also are seeking better alignment and coordination of federally funded programs to ensure they contribute to salmon recovery.

Tribes have met with federal leadership several times to discuss the initiative. Attention is being focused on increased enforcement of existing habitat protection laws, protecting instream flows for salmon, and ensuring that federal agency actions are helping meet salmon recovery needs and goals.

A tribal paper on the initiative, videos and more information are available at treatyrightsatrisk.org.

State of Our Watersheds Report Confirms Ongoing Habitat Loss

For decades, the tribes have been examining the health of their watersheds to gauge progress toward recovery of salmon and their habitat. The result is the recently released State of Our Watersheds report, which confirms that we are losing the battle for salmon recovery. Habitat is being lost faster than it can be restored, and the trend is not improving, which threatens tribal cultures, treaty rights, jobs, and economies, as well as the quality of life for everyone who lives in Washington.

The report tracks key salmon habitat indicators over time – such as the condition of nearshore marine areas, forest habitat along our streams, and water quality and quantity – in 20 watersheds across western Washington.

Some of the report's findings include:

- A 75 percent loss of salt marsh habitat in the Stillaguamish watershed is limiting chinook populations in the river system.
- Herring stocks in the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe's area of concern have declined from healthy to depressed because of degraded nearshore habitat. Herring are important food for salmon.
- In the Chehalis River system, the Quinault Indian Nation estimates that culverts slow or block salmon from reaching more than 1,500 miles of habitat.

(Continued on next page)



Year In Review *(Cont'd)*

The State of Our Watersheds report includes decades of data gathered by tribes and state and federal agencies, as well as recommendations for protecting watersheds and the salmon they produce. More information is available at nwifc.org/sow.

Ruling Expected in Culvert Case

The federal judge presiding over a suit filed in 2001 by western Washington treaty tribes against the state of Washington over hundreds of failing, fish-blocking culverts under state roads has indicated he will issue a final order in the case in early 2013.

Tribes won a summary judgment in the case in 2007 when U.S. District Court Judge Ricardo Martinez ruled that the failing culverts diminish salmon returns and violate tribal treaty fishing rights.

State agencies told the Legislature back in 1995 that fixing culverts was one of the most cost-effective strategies for restoring salmon habitat. In 1997, state agencies estimated that every dollar spent fixing culverts would generate four dollars worth of additional salmon production. At the state's current pace, it will take more than 100 years to fix the nearly 1,000 fish-blocking culverts that remain. Meanwhile, more culverts are failing and blocking salmon passage.

Tribes Respond to Climate Change

Because of their close relationship with the land, water, fish and wildlife, indigenous people are among those most affected by climate change. The treaty tribes in western Washington are addressing the challenges of climate change at local and national levels.

At the local level, tribes are examining how ongoing climate change and its accompanying effects, such as melting glaciers and warmer stream temperatures, will further affect their members and the natural resources that sustain tribal communities, cultures and economies.

At the national level, hundreds of native leaders, witnesses and climate scientists joined policy-makers and non-governmental organizations in July to share adaptation strategies and traditional knowledge to address the effects of climate change. More information is available at firststewards.org.

State Fish Consumption Rate Needs Revision to Protect Health

The state of Washington's inaccurate fish consumption rate was a major focus of tribal efforts in 2012. This rate is used by the state to determine how much pollution is allowed to be dumped in its waters every year. The rate is intended to protect human health from more than 100 toxic pollutants that can be found in state waters.

The state says that 6.5 grams daily – roughly a single 8-ounce meal per month – is how much fish and shellfish residents eat. That standard has been in place for more than 20 years. The state acknowledges that the rate does not protect the majority of Washington residents because most people eat more than one seafood meal a month. This is especially true for Indian people and members of the Asian and Pacific Islander communities here in Washington. Oregon's rate was recently increased to 175 grams per day.

Progress was being made on updating the rate when the state's Department of Ecology abruptly halted the process after industry voiced concerns about the potential cost increasing the rate would have on businesses. Tribes are hoping to re-engage the state in a government-to-government process that will provide a clear, decisive path forward to develop a more accurate fish consumption rate.

Shellfish Co-Management Efforts Continue

Tribes continued in 2012 to work cooperatively with the state of Washington in co-managing shellfish resources.

A major part of that effort was working to update the implementation plan for the 1994 ruling that upheld tribal treaty-reserved shellfish harvest rights. The ruling by Federal District Court Judge Edward Rafeedie determined that tribes had reserved treaty harvest rights to half of all shellfish from usual and accustomed places. The case was a sub-proceeding of the 1974 *U.S. v. Washington* (the Boldt decision) ruling that upheld tribal treaty-reserved fishing rights.

Tribes also continued to work with the state of Washington to improve catch estimation of non-treaty recreational harvest of Dungeness crab. In addition, the tribes and state worked to implement a joint process to streamline regulations for shellfish aquaculture in Puget Sound.

State Budget Deficit Concerns Tribes

A \$2 billion budget deficit has tribes concerned that the state of Washington may be unable to meet its natural resources co-management responsibilities under *U.S. v. Washington*. The state's budget problems, combined with the ongoing loss of salmon habitat and the state's inability to stop that trend, puts tribal cultures and treaty-reserved rights at continued risk.

Of particular concern are budget cuts at state salmon hatcheries. The decline of wild salmon and their habitat already has restricted the tribes' abilities to exercise their treaty-reserved fishing rights. Their rights would be further threatened by more cuts in hatchery production and reduced state participation in co-management.

Habitat Management

Habitat protection and restoration are absolutely essential for recovery of wild salmon in western Washington.

- Salmon habitat in western Washington is being lost faster than it is being restored, and the trend shows no sign of improvement. The ongoing decline of salmon and habitat puts tribal treaty rights, cultures and economies at risk.
- The NWIFC Salmon and Steelhead Habitat Inventory and Assessment Program (SSHIAP) provides a “living database” of local and regional habitat conditions. The program assesses the effect of habitat loss and degradation on salmon and steelhead stocks and assists in developing strategies to protect and restore salmon habitat.
- In 2012, tribes worked with SSHIAP to document ongoing loss and damage to salmon habitat in the State of Our Watersheds report, which can be viewed at nwifc.org/sow.
- Tribes conduct extensive monitoring of water quality for pollution and ensure factors such as dissolved oxygen levels are adequate for salmon and other fish.
- To make limited federal funding work to its fullest, tribes partner with state agencies, industries and property owners through collaborative habitat protection, restoration and enhancement efforts.
- In western Washington, NOAA’s Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund monies have supported projects that have restored thousands of acres of forest, protected hundreds of acres of habitat and removed more than 100 fish passage barriers.

Habitat Critical to Fishermen’s Livelihood



Tiffany Royal

Lower Elwha Klallam tribal member Russ Hepfer looks over the improvements made to Morse Creek near Port Angeles.

When Lower Elwha Klallam tribal member Russ Hepfer learned to fish as a young man, he did it because that’s what his family did.

“I didn’t realize I was being ‘traditional’ when I was fishing,” he said. “It’s just what I was taught. But then I learned over the years how important it was to our tribe and our culture, and now I teach that to my nephews and sons.”

As he grew older, he also became aware of the dwindling salmon population that he and his tribe relied upon. As a result, he started to learn about the importance of good salmon habitat, which is key to sustaining the population runs.

Morse Creek, a 16-mile creek near Port Angeles, is one of the streams that the tribe has been improving. The creek was featured in the 2012 State of Our Watersheds report.

Morse Creek has been hit hard by development and growth in the past, but the tribe is trying to change that. The creek supports chinook, coho and pink salmon, and steelhead.

“How do we undo historic impacts to the salmon habitat in Morse Creek

while preventing future impacts from stormwater, and water withdrawals from other creeks on the peninsula?” Hepfer said.

Morse Creek got a shot of restoration in August 2010 when a half-mile section of the creek was realigned to its historic channel. Since then, salmon have been seen spawning in the restored area.

But the lower 2 miles of Morse Creek have been affected by a combination of land development, channelization, diking and armoring, and streamside vegetation removal.

Nearly half of the creek’s floodplain is being zoned for development, from utility right-of-ways to single-family homes. Historically, the lower reaches of the creek were unconfined and meandered with multiple channels.

“We’re taking two steps forward with restoration efforts but are forced to take one step back as we continue to lose habitat faster than we can save it,” Hepfer said.



Harvest Management

Salmon

- Treaty Indian tribes and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife co-manage salmon fisheries in Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca and nearshore coastal waters.
- For decades, state and tribal salmon co-managers have reduced harvest in response to declining salmon runs. Today's harvest levels are only 80-90 percent of those of 1985. Further reductions will not contribute to the recovery of wild salmon stocks because of disappearing habitat.
- Under *U.S. v. Washington* (the Boldt decision), harvest occurs only after sufficient fish are available to sustain the resource. Harvest management is coordinated to limit mortality of weak wild stocks throughout their migratory range.
- Tribal and state managers work cooperatively through the Pacific Fishery Management Council and the North of Falcon process to develop fishing seasons. The co-managers also cooperate with Canadian and Alaskan fisheries managers through the U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty.
- The tribes monitor their harvest using the Treaty Indian Catch Monitoring Program to provide accurate, same-day catch statistics for treaty Indian fisheries. The program enables close monitoring of tribal harvest levels and allows inseason adjustments.

Salmon Harvest Key to Sustaining Tribal Culture



Kari Neumeier

Stillaguamish Tribal Chairman Shawn Yanity prepares chinook salmon at the tribe's First Salmon Ceremony.

Stillaguamish tribal fishermen have not had a directed commercial chinook fishery in nearly 30 years.

"We are a pretty small fishing community," said Gary Tatro, a fisherman who also works for the tribe as a bison specialist and in cultural support. "We just don't have the fish in the water."

Tatro was one of two designated fishermen who participated in the 2012 ceremonial and subsistence chinook fishery.

"The only reason we fish for chinook is for the salmon ceremony," Tatro said.

The tribe has held these small fisheries since 2009, when Stillaguamish hosted a First Salmon Ceremony for the first time in generations.

This year, Tatro and his fishing partner Shawn Soholt didn't meet the 30-fish limit that was set during preseason planning.

Because returns are so low, each year, the tribe must purchase additional fish from outside the Stillaguamish River system to have enough salmon for their ceremony.

"To have a living culture, you have to practice it," Tatro added. "That's why we have the salmon ceremony. If we're not fishing, the culture dies."

Shellfish

- Treaty tribes harvest Pacific oysters, native littleneck, manila and geoduck clams, Dungeness crab, shrimp and other shellfish throughout the coast and Puget Sound.
- Tribes closely monitor beaches to ensure shellfish are safe to eat.
- Shellfish harvested in commercial fisheries are sold to licensed shellfish buyers who sell either to the public or to other distributors.
- Shellfish from ceremonial and subsistence fisheries are for tribal use only, and are a necessary part of their culture and traditional diet.
- Tribal shellfish programs manage harvest with other tribes and the state through resource-sharing agreements.
- Tribal shellfish enhancement results in higher and more consistent harvest that benefits both tribal and non-Indian diggers. Tribes also research underutilized species, such as Olympia oysters and sea urchins.



Emmett O'Connell

Squaxin Island tribal elder Mike Cooper takes advantage of harvesting on a special elders beach. Shellfish harvest is a major part of the tribe's culture and economy, but not all beaches are easily accessible.



Shellfish Part of Tribal Economic Engine

Shellfish harvest always has been the economic backbone for many tribes, including the Squaxin Island Tribe. Clams, oysters and other shellfish were traded across a large regional intertribal network, bringing in commodities that tribes couldn't find in their own areas.

"Before the treaties, our trade routes extended from the Pacific Ocean up through the Columbia Basin," said Andy Whitener, natural resources director for the tribe. "Our shellfish economy has a rich and extensive history. Shellfish were always more than subsistence, they've always been part of our broader economy."

While their shellfishing trade is centuries old, the Squaxin Island Tribe entered the business world 30 years ago when they bought a family oyster farm on Harstine Island. Over time, that business has grown into Salish Seafoods, which has \$2 million in annual sales, 13 employees and 60 acres of farmed Pacific oyster beds in deep South Sound.

"It's nothing new for us; it's always been part of our economy," said David Johns, general manager for Salish Seafoods. "Certainly we're in modern times, but our seafood trade is something that's always existed."

In addition to farming Pacific oysters, Salish Seafoods also buys most of the manila clams harvested by Squaxin tribal members. Last year, tribal members harvested 500,000 pounds of clams, 400,000 of which were purchased by Salish Seafoods.

"Tribal members aren't limited to selling to us, in fact there are about four other clam buyers that they can sell to," Johns said. "But because we buy from every dig, we ensure tribal members can make decent money throughout the season. We're always there to buy from our tribal members."

A video about Salish Seafoods can be found at go.nwifc.org/salishseafood.

Marine Fish

- Treaty tribes are co-managers of the groundfish resource. They work closely with the state of Washington, federal agencies and in international forums to develop and implement species conservation plans for all groundfish stocks in Puget Sound and along the Pacific coast.
- The Pacific Fishery Management Council regulates the catch of black cod, rockfish and flatfish. Halibut are managed through the International Pacific Halibut Commission, established by the governments of the United States and Canada. Tribes are active participants in season-setting processes and the technical groups that serve those bodies.
- The state of Washington, Hoh Indian Tribe, Makah Tribe, Quileute Tribe and the Quinault Indian Nation are working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to integrate research goals that look at changing ocean conditions and create the building blocks for managing ocean resources. The tribes and state support ocean monitoring and research leading to ecosystem-based management of fishery resources.



Debbie Preston

Scott Mazzone, shellfish and marine biologist, and Bruce Wagner, fisheries technician for the Quinault Indian Nation, remove otoliths from a halibut.

Rockfish Important to Coastal Tribes

Identifying every species of rockfish that comes to the dock is harder than it looks, but for the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN) it provides vital information about economically important groundfish fisheries.

When conducting halibut and black cod longline fisheries, other species are caught incidentally and must be accounted for as part of managing the fishery.

"Our fishermen are required to keep everything they catch and that gives us a really good picture of the types of non-targeted species found in our fishery," said Joe Schumacker, marine scientist for the QIN.

Marine fisheries have been a cornerstone both culturally and economically for Washington treaty tribes. Halibut and black cod fisheries can be the biggest part of a tribal fisherman's income.

The allowable incidental take of some species, including rockfish, is tightly controlled by the Pacific Fisheries Management Council and National Marine Fisheries Service. Annual coastwide catches of these species cannot exceed an amount that would diminish their populations. Some species of rockfish are of particular concern.

"We want to make sure that information is accurate as we go forward, both to manage the stocks and protect our fishery from inaccurate data," Schumacker said.

"Differentiating some of these rockfish species sometimes comes down to the number of spines on the head or even around the eye sockets," Schumacker said.

The earbones, or otoliths, from halibut also are collected to provide information about the age of the fish for the International Pacific Halibut Commission and tribal managers.

Hatchery Management

Most hatcheries were built to make up for the natural salmon production that was lost because of damaged and destroyed habitat.

- Hatcheries play a critical role in fisheries management and fulfilling the tribal treaty-reserved harvest right.
- Hatcheries must remain a central part of salmon management in western Washington as long as lost and degraded habitat prevents watersheds from naturally producing abundant, self-sustaining runs of sufficient size to address the tribal treaty fishing harvest right.
- Hatcheries work best when combined with conservative harvest management, and habitat restoration and protection.
- Tribal, state and federal agencies operate 100 salmon enhancement facilities in western Washington, creating the largest salmon hatchery system in the world. More than 100 million salmon and steelhead are released annually from these hatcheries. Tribes alone release about 40 million juvenile salmon each year.
- Most tribal hatcheries produce salmon for harvest by both Indian and non-Indian fishermen. Some serve as wild salmon nurseries that improve the survival of juvenile fish and increase returns of salmon that spawn naturally in our watersheds.
- Tribes conduct extensive mass marking of hatchery fish along with a coded-wire tag program. Young fish are marked by having their adipose fin clipped before release. Tiny coded-wire tags are inserted into the noses of young salmon. The tags from marked fish are recovered in fisheries, providing important information about marine survival, migration and hatchery effectiveness.

Tribes Help State Hatcheries Through Shortfall

At a time when the state is cutting back on hatchery programs because of a huge budget shortfall, several treaty tribes are picking up the tab to keep salmon coming home for everyone who lives here. Tribes are doing everything from taking over the operation of some state hatcheries to buying fish feed and making donations of cash and labor to keep up production.

"Hatcheries must remain a central part of salmon management in western Washington for as long as lost and degraded habitat prevents watersheds from naturally producing abundant, self-sustaining runs," said Billy Frank Jr., chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

The Puyallup Tribe of Indians recently helped fund a program that is restoring spring chinook in the upper White River watershed. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) couldn't afford to fin-clip the young salmon, so the tribe picked up the cost.

The fin clipping allows salmon managers to track the fish as adults when they return to the White River.

A video about this effort is at go.nwifc.org/whiteriverchinook.

Also in 2012, the Squaxin Island Tribe contributed funds to prevent a 75 percent cut in chinook production at a state salmon hatchery in Tum-

water. Production at the Deschutes River facility had been steady at 4 million chinook, but because of a shortfall in legislative funding, only about 1 million fish would have been released.

On the coast, the Quileute Tribe took over the lease last year of the Bear Springs hatchery, a fish-rearing facility formerly run by WDFW and owned by the state Department of Natural Resources. The hatchery released 50,000 chinook.

The Quinault Indian Nation provided funds to the state's Hump-tulips Hatchery to feed 300,000 coho and chinook up to release size in 2012.

While tribal hatcheries have been producing fish for nearly 40 years, federal funding has not kept pace, threatening the tribes' ability to implement vital hatchery reform projects and produce hatchery salmon for harvest.

Archie Cantrell, a fisheries technician for the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, transports juvenile spring chinook from the state Hupp Springs hatchery to the upper White River. The tribe contributed funds in 2012 to make sure the recovery program continues.



Emmett O'Connell



Wildlife Management

The treaty Indian tribes are co-managers of wildlife resources in western Washington, which include species such as deer, elk, bear and mountain goats.

- Western Washington treaty tribal hunters account for a very small portion of the total combined deer and elk harvest in the state. In 2011-2012, treaty tribal hunters harvested a reported 365 elk and 495 deer, while non-Indian hunters harvested a reported 7,236 elk and 29,154 deer.
- Tribal hunters do not hunt for sport, but for sustenance. Most do not hunt only for themselves. Tribal culture in western Washington is based on extended family relationships with hunters sharing game with several families. Some tribes have designated hunters who harvest wildlife for tribal elders and others unable to hunt for themselves, and for ceremonial purposes.
- All tribes prohibit hunting for commercial purposes.
- As a sovereign government, each treaty tribe develops its own hunting regulations and ordinances for tribal members.
- Tribal hunters are licensed by their tribes and must obtain tags for game animals they wish to hunt.
- Many tribes conduct hunter education programs aimed at teaching tribal youth safe hunting practices and the cultural importance of wildlife to the tribe.

Rebounding Herd Allows for Tribal Harvest

Tulalip tribal member Beau Jess was thrilled to be one of three hunters in his tribe to receive a permit to harvest a bull elk in Game Management Unit 418.

Tulalip and the other Point Elliott Treaty tribes shared 25 permits to harvest Nooksack elk in 2012, because the herd had rebounded from as low as 300 animals in 2003 to as many as 1,400, according to the most recent aerial surveys.

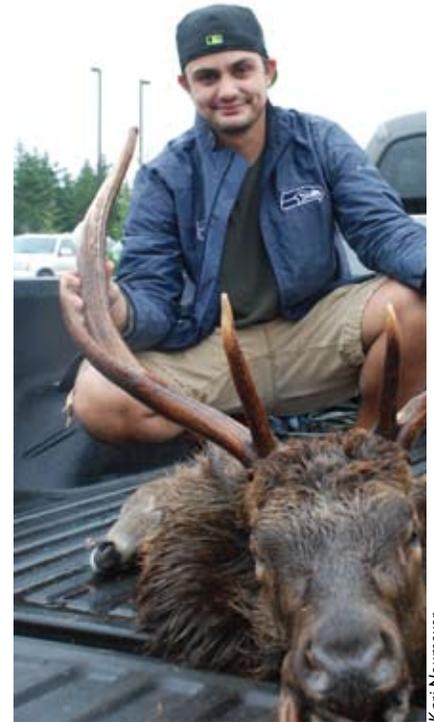
The other tribes with the treaty right to harvest elk in the North Cascades Mountains are Lummi, Nooksack, Muckleshoot, Sauk-Suiattle, Stillaguamish, Suquamish, Swinomish and Upper Skagit.

"I started hunting with my dad when I was 10, but this was the first year I hunted on my own," said the 21-year-old Jess. In October, he harvested a 408-pound bull, which will provide his family with a year of elk steak, roast, sausage and burgers.

For many northwest tribes, the ability to harvest elk and deer is as important to tribal culture as salmon fishing. Tribal members traditionally relied on elk and deer meat for sustenance, and in modern times, the protein source helps their communities stretch tight food budgets.

About 20 years ago, tribal and state wildlife co-managers agreed to stop hunting elk in the North Cascades because the Nooksack herd's population was dwindling fast, in part because of overharvest, but largely because of degraded and disconnected habitat.

"We have a treaty right, but no place to exercise it, and not enough animals to harvest," said Todd Wilbur, Swinomish tribal member and chairman of the Inter-tribal Wildlife Committee. "We've gone from being able to feed our families with our



Kari Neumeyer

Tulalip tribal member Beau Jess harvested his first bull elk in 2012.

harvest to having nine tribes share 25 animals."

During the past two decades, the co-managers completed numerous habitat restoration projects to improve elk forage. The co-managers also boosted the herd in 2003 and 2005 by relocating about 100 cow elk to the North Cascades from the Mount St. Helens region.

In 2007, the Nooksack herd was stable enough to support a small hunt of 30 elk, which the Point Elliott tribes and state shared equally. Limited permit-only hunts have taken place each year since then in Game Management Unit 418. In 2012, in addition to the 25 permits shared by Point Elliott Treaty tribes, the state issued 25 permits to harvest Nooksack elk.

Regional Collaborative Management

Cooperation is the key to sound natural resources management. Treaty Indian tribes are active participants in many collaborative efforts to enhance, protect and restore natural resources in western Washington.

Ocean Ecosystem Management

- The state of Washington, Hoh Indian Tribe, Makah Tribe, Quileute Tribe and the Quinault Indian Nation are working with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to integrate common research goals to understand changing ocean conditions and create the building blocks for managing these resources.
- In recognition of the challenges facing the Olympic coast ecosystem, tribes and the state of Washington established the Intergovernmental Policy Council (IPC) to guide management of Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. The tribes and state have developed ocean research and planning goals, many of which mirror the recommendations of the U.S. Ocean Policy.
- Climate change has been a major focus of the IPC for the past two years. Because of their unique vulnerability, coastal indigenous cultures are leaders in societal adaptation and mitigation in response to climate change impacts. The IPC created First Stewards, a first-of-its-kind national symposium held in July 2012 in Washington, D.C., to examine the impact of climate change on coastal indigenous communities throughout the United States and Pacific Islands. Hundreds of tribal leaders, witnesses and scientists met with climate change experts and policymakers for the groundbreaking dialogue.
- Coastal tribes are participating with the state of Washington to develop a coastal marine spatial plan for the outer coast. This would serve as a component for an overall state plan encompassing waters from the lower Columbia River estuary to Puget Sound. In addition, the state and tribal plan would be part of a larger federal regional coastal marine spatial plan for the West Coast.
- Coastal tribes engage with the White House's National Ocean Council and Council on Environmental Quality regarding implementation of the National Ocean Policy and developing joint goals and objectives on ocean governance.

Tribes Co-host First Stewards Symposium



Debbie Preston

The Hoh, Makah and Quileute tribes and the Quinault Indian Nation dance for the symposium audience at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian.

Climate change is occurring rapidly, creating an urgent need for the world to make use of indigenous ways of adapting and maintaining the resiliency that has served ancient coastal cultures for thousands of years.

That was the message delivered by representatives of indigenous coastal people of the United States and Pacific Islands when they gathered in 2012 in Washington, D.C., for the First Stewards Symposium, where their unified voices called for action on climate change.

The First Stewards Symposium was created to gather voices and create a mechanism for the indigenous people of the United States and Pacific Islands to engage with governments, non-governmental agencies and others to help mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The coastal tribes of Washington – Hoh, Makah and Quileute tribes and the Quinault Indian Nation – co-hosted the symposium after seeing changes in their own villages that affect treaty-protected resources.

“What we must prepare for now is staggering, but we must design regional and national pathways to create ways of working together to

adapt to and reduce the speed of these changes,” said Micah McCarty, Makah tribal member and president of the First Stewards board of directors.

The Quinault Indian Nation (QIN) has seen the glaciers that feed the Queets and Quinault rivers of Washington's Olympic coast become just fractions of the size they were a few decades ago. As they recede, they threaten treaty-protected salmon stocks important to QIN.

“The blueback, or sockeye salmon, is an iconic run of salmon for us,” said Ed Johnstone, a Quinault Indian Nation tribal member and fisheries policy spokesman. “We are undertaking a monumental restoration effort in the upper Quinault River, but now the glacier retreat adds to the problems for the fish.”

The very fabric of indigenous societies is threatened by the over-development of coastlines, alteration of freshwater streams and lakes, destruction of life-giving watersheds, destruction of reefs, and the decline of marine and terrestrial species. These have been exacerbated by climate change, creating changes in coastal natural systems and witnessed by indigenous cultures.



Forest Management

- Treaty tribes in western Washington manage their forestlands in ways that benefit people, fish, wildlife and water. Healthy forests support healthy streams for salmon and enable wildlife to thrive.
- Forests are a source of treaty-protected foods, medicine and cultural items.
- Tribes that harvest timber on their reservations have forest management plans and conduct extensive reforestation programs to ensure trees for the future.
- Two processes, Timber/Fish/Wildlife (TFW) and the Forests and Fish Report (FFR), have brought together tribes, state and federal agencies, environmental groups and private forest landowners in an adaptive management process to protect salmon, wildlife and other species while providing for the economic health of the timber industry.
- A tribal representative serves on the state's Forest Practices Board, which sets standards for activities such as timber harvests, road construction and forest chemical applications. Tribes also are active participants in the FFR Cooperative Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Committee.

Puget Sound Partnership

- Tribes continued their participation and leadership in the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP) in 2012. The PSP was created by Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire in 2005 to recover Puget Sound's health by 2020.
- Tribes participated extensively in updating the PSP Action Agenda while implementing a wide range of projects aimed at improving the health of Puget Sound. Tribal leaders also traveled to Washington, D.C. with PSP leadership to advocate for common interests.
- Projects included monitoring forage fish populations near Indian Island in Puget Sound; identifying sources and potential treatment of land-based pollutant runoff in the Stillaguamish River system; and mapping and monitoring the Skokomish River estuary to assess performance of restoration efforts.
- Nearly 1,400 acres of shellfish beds reportedly were reopened for harvest. Approximately 2,300 acres of habitat restoration projects were completed in the 16 major river delta estuaries.
- Ground is still being lost faster than it has been gained. Progress in the region has not been sufficient to meet the partnership's 2020 ecosystem recovery targets for the region.

Tribal Environmental Protection and Water Resources Program

- More than two decades ago, Pacific Northwest tribes partnered with the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to address water quality issues under the Clean Water Act. The unprecedented relationship, called the Coordinated Tribal Water Quality Program, has improved tribal water quality management and protection of tribal lands and treaty-reserved resources.
- Partnerships between the EPA and individual tribes have involved environmental protection activities in watersheds throughout the region and enabled the leveraging and partnering of county, state and federal funds.
- EPA's General Assistance Program (GAP) was established in 1992 to build capacity for environmental protection programs at every federally recognized tribe in the country. Many tribes have successfully built basic operational capacity with GAP funds and are ready to move to the next step of implementing those environmental programs.
- Tribes are leaders in a pilot project, called "Beyond GAP," to build on the investments of the past 20 years by implementing environmental programs locally, while providing leadership in shaping the next steps in EPA's Indian Program development nationally.
- Tribal treaty resources continue to be threatened by declining water quality and quantity. In western Washington, climate changes and urban development are having profound effects on water resources and aquatic ecosystems. This situation will worsen with the state population expected to increase by 1 million in the next 20 years.
- Goals of tribal water resources programs include establishing instream flows to sustain harvestable populations of salmon, identifying limiting factors for salmon recovery, protecting existing ground and surface water supplies, and participating in federal, state and local planning processes for water quantity and quality management.
- Tribes were disappointed in 2012 when the state delayed its update of the fish consumption rate used to determine how much toxic pollution is allowed to enter Washington waters. The rate is supposed to protect residents from more than 100 toxins that can harm human health.



NWIFC Functions, Programs and Activities

The Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission was created in 1974 by the 20 treaty Indian tribes in western Washington that were parties to the *U.S. v. Washington* (the Boldt decision) litigation that affirmed their treaty-reserved salmon harvest rights and established the tribes as natural resources co-managers with the state.

The NWIFC is an intertribal organization that assists member tribes with their natural resources co-management responsibilities. Member tribes select commissioners who develop policy and provide direction for the organization. The commission employs about 70 full-time employees and is headquartered in Olympia, Wash., with satellite offices in Forks, Kingston and Burlington.

The NWIFC provides broad policy coordination as well as high-quality technical and support services for its member tribes in the co-management of natural resources in western Washington. The NWIFC serves as a clearinghouse for information on natural resources management issues important to member tribes. The commission also acts as a forum for tribes to address issues of shared concern, and enables the tribes to speak with a unified voice.

Habitat Services

- Support policy and technical discussion between tribes and federal, state and local governments, and other interested parties regarding protection and recovery of tribal treaty resources.
- Coordinate, represent and further tribal interests in the Timber/Fish/Wildlife Forests and Fish Report process and Coordinated Tribal Water Quality Program. Analyze and distribute technical information on habitat-related forums, programs and issues.
- Implement the Salmon and Steelhead Habitat Inventory and Assessment Project.

U.S./Canada Pacific Salmon Treaty

- Facilitate inter-tribal and inter-agency meetings, develop issue papers and negotiation options.
- Inform tribes and policy representatives about issues affected by the treaty implementation process.
- Serve on the pink, chum, coho, chinook, Fraser sockeye and data-sharing technical committees, as well as other workgroups and panels.
- Coordinate tribal research and data-gathering activities associated with implementation of the Pacific Salmon Commission.

Enhancement Services

- Coordinate coded-wire tagging of more than 4 million fish at tribal hatcheries to provide information critical to fisheries management.
- Analyze coded-wire data.
- Provide genetic, ecological and statistical consulting for tribal hatchery programs.
- Provide fish health services to tribal hatcheries in the areas of juvenile fish health monitoring, disease diagnosis, adult health inspection and vaccine production.

Fisheries Management

- Long-range planning, wild salmon recovery efforts and federal Endangered Species Act implementation.
- Annual fisheries planning: developing preseason agreements; preseason and inseason run size forecasts; monitoring; and postseason fishery analysis and reporting.
- Marine fish management planning.
- Shellfish management planning.

Quantitative Services

- Administer and coordinate the Treaty Indian Catch Monitoring Program.
- Provide statistical consulting services.
- Conduct data analysis of fisheries studies and develop study designs.
- Update and evaluate fishery management statistical models and databases.

Information and Education Services

- Provide internal and external communication services to member tribes and NWIFC.
- Develop and distribute communication products such as news releases, newsletters, videos, social media, photos and web-based content.
- Respond to public requests for information about the tribes and their tribal natural resources management activities.
- Work with state agencies, environmental organizations and others in cooperative communication efforts.



Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
6730 Martin Way E.
Olympia, WA 98516
(360) 438-1180
nwifc.org