

# *Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission*

# NEWS

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# Habitat Is The Key

**By Billy Frank Jr.  
NWIFC Chairman**



From beginning to end, a wild salmon's life is determined by the quality and quantity of its habitat. More than any other factor, habitat determines whether a wild salmon will successfully grow to adulthood and reproduce.

Yes, other factors come into play during a salmon's life history. A fish may be harvested before it returns to spawn. Salmon released from hatcheries may out-compete wild fish for food or rearing habitat.

But without adequate, quality spawning and rearing habitat, there is no hope for wild salmon.

We can, and have, significantly reduced harvests to protect wild fish. Still, their populations decline. We can, and have, changed hatchery practices to minimize impacts to wild fish. Still, their populations decline.

We could stop all fishing, now and forever, and some wild salmon runs would still become extinct. Why? Because wild salmon spawning and rearing habitat continues to disappear. It's being paved over. It's being degraded by water pollution. It's disappearing from the demands for water and space from the millions who live in this region now and the thousands who move here each month. But this is nothing

new. It's been happening for a long time.

Instead of tackling the real problem, though, we continue to seek quick fixes and easy answers.

Harvest reductions and changes in hatchery practices are part of the overall solution to restoring wild salmon runs. But without a comprehensive effort to address habitat loss and degradation, we are doomed to failure.

It's easy to point a finger at fisherman as the cause of the problem for declining salmon stocks. We know when, where and how many salmon they are harvesting. But there are other ways to take salmon. Habitat loss and degradation from urbanization, agricultural practices and other activities "take" salmon just as effectively as a hook or net. A dead fish is a dead fish.

If we are serious about saving wild salmon, we must get serious about protecting and restoring their habitat. We need to insist that the solutions we propose are biologically sound. We must make it easier for everyone to do the right thing for salmon, perhaps by providing tax credits and developing land trusts. And we must be tougher on those who would destroy or damage the salmon's home.

That doesn't mean that we must make a choice between wild salmon and a healthy economy in this state. It just means that if we want both, we must choose more wisely and carefully than we have so far.

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**On the cover:** An orca, or killer whale, leaps from the waters of Dyes Inlet near Silverdale. Nineteen whales spent a month this fall in the shallow bay feeding on returning coho and chum salmon, forcing the Suquamish Indian Tribe to cut short its commercial fisheries. See stories on pages 6-7. *Photo: D. Williams*

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## Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission News

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### NWIFC Member Tribes

Jamestown S'Klallam .... 360-683-1109	Nooksack ..... 360-592-5176	Skokomish ..... 360-426-4232
Lower Elwha Klallam .... 360-452-8471	Port Gamble S'Klallam .. 360-297-2646	Squaxin Island ..... 360-426-9781
Lummi ..... 360-384-2210	Puyallup ..... 253-597-6200	Stillaguamish ..... 360-652-7362
Makah ..... 360-645-2205	Quileute ..... 360-374-6163	Suquamish ..... 360-598-3311
Muckleshoot ..... 253-939-3311	Quinault ..... 360-276-8211	Swinomish ..... 360-466-3163
Nisqually ..... 360-456-5221	Sauk-Suiattle ..... 360-436-0132	Tulalip ..... 360-651-4000
		Upper Skagit ..... 360-856-5501

News Staff: Tony Meyer, Manager, Information Services Division and South Puget Sound Information Officer (IO); Doug Williams, Strait/Hood Canal IO; Logan Harris, North Sound IO; Debbie Preston, Coastal IO; and Sheila McCloud, Editorial Assistant. For more information please contact: NWIFC Information Services at (360) 438-1180 in Olympia; (360) 424-8226 in Mount Vernon; or (360) 297-6546 in Kingston.

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# Wild Salmonid Policy Nears Agreement

Western Washington treaty Indian tribes and the state Fish and Wildlife Commission are nearing completion of a joint Wild Salmonid Policy to guide recovery of wild salmon stocks into the next century.

The Fish and Wildlife Commission unanimously adopted a policy in early December, but acknowledged some modifications may be necessary pending a final review and approval by tribal governments.

“The commission and Department of Fish and Wildlife will continue to work closely with the tribes to resolve remaining issues so we all can get on with the daunting challenge of rebuilding these wild fish runs,” said Lisa Pelly, the state Fish and Wildlife Commission’s chairwoman.

“This policy is an important part of our overall effort to save wild salmon in this region,” said Billy Frank Jr., NWIFC Chairman.

The joint Wild Salmonid Policy is a major component of the tribal/state

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'In many ways, the joint Wild Salmonid Policy already is being implemented.'

— Billy Frank Jr.

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Wild Stock Restoration Initiative begun in 1991 to address the decline of wild salmon stocks. Other parts of the initiative include a completed stock status inventory and a nearly completed habitat inventory and assessment. In addition, a number of wild salmon stock recovery plans already are in place and are showing promising results.

“In many ways, the joint Wild Salmonid Policy already is being imple-



Port Gamble S'Klallam and Quilcene National Fish Hatchery staff gather Hood Canal summer chum for broodstock as part of recovery efforts for the wild run. Photo: D. Williams

mented,” Frank said. “I am also encouraged by the attention and leadership that Gov. Locke is providing on this issue. His appointment of Curt Smitch as his natural resources adviser and his creation of the Joint Natural Resource Cabinet, among other actions, clearly demonstrates his commitment to addressing the issue.”

The joint Wild Salmonid Policy, Frank said, lays out a framework that will guide and integrate the actions of governments, agencies, industry, organizations and the public to protect and recover wild salmon stocks.

Regional or watershed initiatives are at the heart of the Wild Salmonid Policy. Specific recovery plans will be developed for each watershed and will guide how fisheries, habitat and hatcheries will be managed.

On-the-ground examples of how the policy will work are already showing results. A five-year-old tribal/state/federal effort to rebuild extremely low Hood Canal wild summer chum stocks resulted in near record returns in 1996.

Similar programs also are helping to rebuild spring chinook stocks on the White River, as well as chinook stocks on the Nooksack, Tucannon and Dungeness rivers.

“This policy represents a real change from the status quo,” Frank said. “While we have always conducted fisheries responsibly, this policy requires integration of habitat recovery with hatchery and harvest practices. The effects of hatcheries on wild salmon will be reduced. We also will operate with clear standards and action strategies to deal with habitat.”

Almost as important, Frank said, the joint Wild Salmonid Policy signals a return to cooperative co-management of the resource.

“Development of this policy has helped the tribes and state Fish and Wildlife Commission to find common ground and learn to work together. The working relationships we have developed are important for the hard work that lies ahead of us,” Frank said.

— T. Meyer

# Makahs Receive Whale Quota

Powerful ancient songs filled the community center as the Makah Tribe celebrated the recognition of its treaty right to hunt whales.

The International Whaling Commission, meeting in Monaco in October, approved a quota that allows the Makahs an average of four gray whales a year for five years. The gathering gave the Makah community a chance to celebrate with the representatives who have fought to restore the treaty right.

Micah McCarty, 26, will train to become one of the hunters. He finds it hard to put into words the feelings he has about an ancient family tradition of whaling and the exhilaration of knowing he will participate.

"It's a real deep-rooted emotion that is almost impossible to explain. The English language doesn't have a whole lot of words to describe some of the feelings we get. It's almost the same as when I'm learning a native song and I'm saying the words right and singing the melody... I get this electrical charge in my body and my skin tingles. There is a power there that can't be explained. It's basically a type of reverence," McCarty said.

The Makah whaling tradition dates back at least 1,500 years. The tribe stopped whaling in the early 1900s after commercial whalers had decimated whale stocks and government assimilation programs forced tribal members to abandon their intricate whaling rituals. The gray whale was taken off the Endangered Species list in 1994 and the Makahs began the process of re-establishing a subsistence and cultural whale hunt.

The joyous celebration of the long battle to win acknowledgement of the tribe's right to hunt whales started and ended with song and dance, including a tribute by members of the Quileute Tribe.

Following dinner, each tribal delegate who traveled to Monaco was given a chance to speak. They talked about explaining to the international representatives the history of the Makahs and their relationship with the whale. They spoke of seeing delegates with tears in their eyes as they described their history and the need for the re-establishment of whaling in the Makah culture.

But most of all, they spoke of the strength of each member of the Makah delegation and the power they derived from the



A Makah youngster enjoys the festivities. Photos: D. Preston

support of the tribe at home.

The tribe tentatively plans to take their first whale in the fall of 1998 following the completion of hunter training in traditional and humane harvest methods.

Wayne Johnson, 44, comes from a traditional whaling family. He grew up hearing stories of the hunt from relatives who were whalers.

"I'm probably in the last generation who really grew up in the culture, with the songs and the dances. To go over to Monaco and have a piece of winning our heritage back and uniting our people has been great," Johnson said.

John McCarty, 63, relishes the memory of winning the allocation in Monaco. "Up until the very last day, we thought we were going to go home with no whales. But the night before the final day, the Russians and Eskimos took us all out to dinner. They told us 'Don't hang your heads low, be proud.' They told us about how long they had to struggle to get what they have. It was very helpful because we were feeling so low," he said.

"Then, when we got the whales, everyone, including the U.S. delegation, was in a highly emotional state. We were dancing and singing and the hotel management told us we had to be quiet, but we closed the doors and windows and kept right on dancing and singing," John McCarty said.

The men said it has been a unifying experience for the whole community. The final healing and culmination of the struggle will be when the first whale hits the beach, McCarty said.

Makah Whaling Commission member George Bowechop said a whale management plan is being finalized. Training will begin immediately and will continue through the spring.

"We're going to do this under all applicable federal laws and make sure the men are safe," Bowechop said.

— D.Preston



Makah tribal members celebrated their whaling quota with songs, drumming and dance in the tribal community center.

# Lummi Nation Takes In Orphan Coho



Marlin Dennis, assistant Skookum Creek Hatchery manager, helps transfer coho salmon fingerlings from a state Department of Fish and Wildlife truck to one of Lummi Nation's tribal hatchery ponds. *Photo: L. Harris*

Roughly 800,000 coho salmon were given a new lease on life as fingerling-laden tanker trucks from Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife arrived at Lummi Nation's Skookum Hatchery.

The fish, previously being raised at the state's Kendall Creek Hatchery, were transferred to the Lummi facility in late October.

Doomed to almost certain death because the state Legislature slashed the money needed to raise the fish, the Lummi Natural Resources Department, a timber company and a stream rehabilitation group rushed to the rescue last summer.

The state Department of Fish and Wildlife announced last spring that, due to budget cuts, it would reduce production of its Kendall Creek Hatchery coho from 1.1 million to 300,000, even though the fish were already reared for half of 1997. "It's like flushing the fish down a toilet," said Lummi Natural Resources Director Merle Jefferson about a plan to prematurely release the fledgling fish into the Nooksack River.

The Lummi Natural Resources Department led a letter-drafting effort with

the Nooksack Tribe and the state, asking companies and organizations for \$18,500 to keep the fish alive until next summer, when they can be released into the river with a true chance at survival. Timber company Crown Pacific committed 70 percent of the money and the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Asso-

ciation, a local stream rehabilitation organization, chipped in the balance.

The Lummi Nation, for its part, volunteered to rear the fingerlings at its Skookum Creek Hatchery until June 1998. The state used the \$13,000 to maintain the fish at the Kendall Creek Hatchery until they were transferred to Skookum Creek. The tribe will absorb all costs to raise the fish except for the \$5,500 it will need to feed them.

Saving the Kendall Creek coho is great news, Jefferson said, but he remains concerned about future state budget cuts that affect Nooksack River fisheries. Still, Jefferson said he is hopeful the remarkable community response will lead to bigger and better cooperative projects in the future.

"It was nice to see that some other groups have concerns like we do and would step forward to help save these fish," he said. "This is a great example of the kind of cooperative effort we're going to need if we are ever going to recover Nooksack coho and chinook runs. Everybody is going to have to pitch in and contribute to the recovery."

— *L. Harris*

## Railroad Bridge Park Receives National Audubon Designation

The Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, Rainshadow Natural Science Foundation and National Audubon Society have teamed up to spread the word about the Dungeness River watershed through the development of Railroad Bridge Park.

Built alongside an old railroad trestle that spans the noisy Dungeness River, the park is currently 16 acres and could soon double in size. The park was dedicated in 1993. Interpretive signs have been installed along an elevated walkway that offers overhead views of the river and streamside areas. An amphitheater and picnic shelter have already been installed.

An interpretive center is planned that, when completed, will feature many displays on the natural history of the Olympic Peninsula, with particular emphasis on the Dungeness River.

"This partnership is something we're very excited about and something we're looking forward to," said Ron Allen, chairman of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe.

The Dungeness River natural history center will be the first National Audubon Center in the state.

# Chum Returns Low In Most Areas

Poor ocean survival, and big predators during the peak of the run in one area, appear to have taken their toll on chum salmon returns for much of western Washington.

Most regions, with the notable exception of Hood Canal, are seeing returns far below pre-season expectations – and below averages for recent years. Some river systems are as much as 60 to 70 percent below forecast.

Some areas were just starting to see chum in the rivers as *NWIFC News* went to press in early December. More chum could be expected to trickle in for a few weeks longer. But there was a general downward trend for virtually all of the major chum producing regions.

“I don’t think there are any firm answers on what exactly happened this year in most systems,” said Jay Zischke, management biologist for the Suquamish Indian Tribe. “More than anything, there was probably a shift in ocean survival.”

Skagit System Cooperative Harvest Management Biologist Bob McClure said the pre-season estimate of 60,000 chum returning to the system is well above what will likely show up. “We’re looking at a number between 41,000 and 43,000 run size,” he said.

Entering December, the total return of wild and hatchery chum to the Stillaguamish and Snohomish system was roughly 70 percent below the pre-season forecast, said Kit Rawson, harvest management biologist for the Tulalip Tribes.

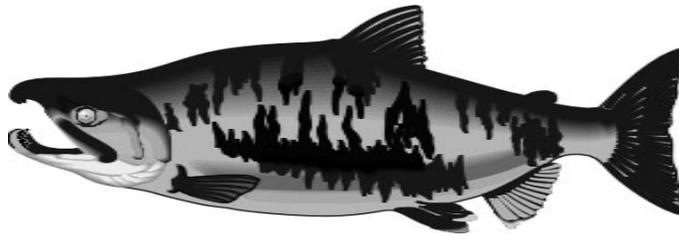
The low run size, confirmed by low spawning observations, led Tulalip to close its commercial fisheries – a move mirrored by state fisheries managers.

Add to the poor ocean survival conditions a pod of 19 hungry killer whales, and you’ve got the problem mid-Puget Sound fisheries managers had to deal with. For 30 days, the whales ravenously fed in Dyes Inlet on chum spawners returning to Chico Creek, the principle chum producer in mid Puget Sound. (*See related story on next page.*)

“It’s very clear from the spawner surveys conducted that there’s a big hole in the run this year,” said Zischke. “We have a 15,000 fish escapement number into (Chico Creek); this year, we’ll be happy to get one third of that. I hope we can get 5,000 fish.”

The tribe shut down its chum fisheries well before the anticipated peak of the run.

The numbers are looking so bad in south Puget Sound this year, they don’t even fit on charts.



“We’re faced with an updated estimate of about 104,000 fish for all of south sound,” Zischke said. Last year’s escapement of about 630,000 chum to the south was the largest in decades. The average escapement during the 1990s has ranged between about 400,000 and 600,000 fish.

“We knew well that we had some big problems in south sound with chum this year,” Zischke said. “This led us to adopt a very cautious approach in our management planning.”

Low returns were confirmed by Apple Cove Point test fishery, which took just 300 fish in four days of fishing – the worst catches on record. But despite all of these indications of big problems, some sport fisheries for chum remained open in south Sound.

“It’s not catastrophic – we’ve had low returns before,” Zischke said. “We had great escapement last year, and if we’re OK next year, then we’ll be fine in the long run.”

Hood Canal chum returns seem to be bucking the downward trend. An estimated run size of 600,000 to 700,000 fish, including both wild and hatchery stocks, is returning to Hood Canal this year. If the number holds up, it will fall right in between state and tribal pre-season estimates.

Chum are just beginning to trickle in to north Olympic Peninsula streams, said Mike McHenry, habitat biologist for the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, where the hatchery crew has begun collecting its broodstock.



Only 300 fish were collected in four days of chum test fishing in Puget Sound. Photo: D. Preston

# Tribe Cancels Chum Fishery To Help Whales



Hundreds of boats, including kayaks, clogged Dyes Inlet for an up-close look at the whales. Photo: D. Williams

It had been years since anyone could remember seeing a pod of orcas in Dyes Inlet near Silverdale. After all, the bay is ringed with shopping malls, fast-food restaurants, and sprawling apartment complexes – not exactly the pristine surroundings the mind conjures up as the ideal place to see whales.

But for one month this fall, the small Kitsap County bay was home to 19 of the sleek sea mammals. The whales, which normally ply the open waters of northern Puget Sound and San Juan Islands, had apparently followed coho and chum salmon schools into Dyes Inlet.

The whales' visit was acknowledged by the Suquamish Indian Tribe, which closed one of its most dependable chum salmon fisheries because of the hungry mammals. Their presence made a bad year worse for many local chum stocks, said Jay Zischke, fisheries biologist for the tribe.

"There was 126,000 pounds of predator in that bay for a whole month," said Zischke, who estimated the whales were eating about 700 fish a day. "The tribe said, 'hey, if the whales are out there taking them, then we need to ratchet down our fisheries, because they have a right to the fish, too.'"

Suquamish vice Chairman Merle Hayes said the whales' presence meant fishermen from his tribe suffered a potential loss of 12,000 to 15,000 fish, valued at \$60,000 or more.

"It would have made a bad season a little more bearable," he said, adding that the link is strong between the whales coming into Dyes Inlet in search of food and reports of chum runs crashing in many western Washington rivers.

"To me, the whales are an indicator that things aren't right out there," he said.

For members of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, the whales' visit was a reminder of the strong link between man and animal. The orca, or killer whale, is a central figure in S'Klallam lore and in the artwork of tribal artisans. The tribal crest shows an orca, designed by tribal chairman Gerald "Jake" Jones, a hereditary S'Klallam chief and master carver.

The tribe twice took its 35-foot-long cedar canoe, *the Klumichin* – the S'Klallam word for an orca – to Dyes Inlet to pay their respects to the whales.

"We took both elders and little children out to see the whales. Some of those people had never been out in our canoe before," Jones said.

— D. Williams

## Whales Loom Large In S'Klallam History

Port Gamble S'Klallam tribal chairman Gerald "Jake" Jones, a hereditary chief of the S'Klallam people, remembers when orcas, *Klumichin*, were a common sight in Port Gamble Bay.

"As kids, we were kind of afraid of them because of all the stories everybody used to tell about them," Jones said.

One well known story is about Charlie Jones, a S'Klallam who lived on Port Gamble Bay late last century.

"Charlie Jones was with a bunch of guys down on the beach near Point Julia," Jones said. "He went wandering off toward the point, and started calling out over the water in Indian words for a killer whale to come to him on the shore. All of the sudden a great big killer whale came up right onto the beach, and Charlie Jones climbed up onto

his back, and the whale swam back out into the bay and dove down to the bottom.

"Charlie's wife was on the beach, too, and she saw the whale go down with Charlie on his back. She thought he'd drowned, so she started to cry. About half an hour later, she was still crying and walking along the beach and all of the sudden Charlie came up to her, all soaking wet, and said, 'what are you crying about?,' and he was all right.

"We used to have two pods that would come in to the bay all the time," Jones added. "They would eat the salmon, and I think they used to eat the big herring that would come in here to spawn. About five years ago, a great big male came in right in front of my house. And that's the last time I've seen a killer whale in Port Gamble Bay."

— D. Williams

# TFW

## Negotiations Could Result In Better Ecosystem Protection

Current Timber/Fish/Wildlife (TFW) negotiations regarding forest practices rules and regulations offer the tribes, the timber industry and the state a rare opportunity to integrate what has been learned about fish habitat into the rule book.

The tribes' objective in the negotiations is a sustainable fish, wildlife, and plant community resource base that provides for the cultural, subsistence, and economic needs for tribal communities, tribal officials say. The tribes want to maintain the forest land base as an economically sound enterprise that is managed consistent with continued fish, wildlife and plant community beneficial uses, and which provides for tribal co-management access, as well as harvest of resources for cultural, subsistence and economic benefits.

The timber industry's objective is to achieve long-term regulatory certainty with respect to Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act (ESA) regulations by voluntarily undertaking more stringent forest practices guidelines that do more to protect fish habitat and water quality. The state and industry understand that current rules will not prevent ESA listing of salmon species, but the hope is to keep listings to a minimum.

Negotiations began Nov. 6; a final draft of the rules is expected in January. Both the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Environmental Protection Agency, the federal agencies that are most concerned with the Clean Water Act and ESA listings of salmon, will also participate in the negotiations.

"We have an opportunity to integrate what's been learned with Watershed Analysis and other efforts and have it applied in the standard rule package for all landowners, whether they are under a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) or ESA recovery plan," said Joseph Pavel, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission policy analyst.

TFW is a cooperative natural resource management process created in 1986 that addresses forest practices on state and private lands in the Washington. TFW is a living pro-

cess that provides protection for fish, wildlife, water quality and other natural resources, while providing long-term stability for the timber industry through greater flexibility and predictability of forest management regulations.

The tribal goals for the TFW forestry module are:

- Not only sustainable levels of fish and wildlife, but harvestable levels guaranteed to tribes in the treaties.
- Protection and restoration of water quality and cultural resources.

Main areas of tribal focus will include:

- The riparian ecosystem in and around stream systems. Riparian areas are needed as sources of woody debris

for fish habitat as well as providing shade to streams to maintain lower water temperatures. Currently, riparian habitat on smaller streams considered to have "no fish" receives little or no protection under forest practices rules.

- Timber harvest on hillsides. The tribes propose no harvest of trees on the most unstable slopes. Slides on these slopes can deliver heavy loads of sediment to streams. Studies have shown that excessive silt in streams smothers and kills salmon eggs.

- Forest roads. The tribes will seek an inventory of all forest roads, including abandoned

roads, to identify, prioritize and fix many areas where fish passage is blocked due to failing culverts or threatened by road beds that are likely to fail.

- Restoration. The tribes encourage restoration of all areas with degraded habitat conditions. Those restoration efforts would be treated as experiments and monitored to determine whether the effort was successful.

- Adaptive management. This is the process that views natural resource management as experimental. Scientific knowledge and experience gained by agreed-upon monitoring and evaluation will lead to more responsive approaches for managing natural resources.

Adaptive management allows flexibility to test or change regulations and methods in recognition that scientific knowledge will improve over time. New information based on monitoring would be used to change management plans to meet resource objectives.

The TFW forestry module negotiations represent one of the best mediums for all stakeholders to come together and make meaningful changes in the forest practices rules that reflect the growing scientific evidence about what is important to water quality and fish habitat, Pavel said. —D. Preston



# Tribal Surveys Reveal Large Geoduck Population

It turns out that there are millions, not thousands, of pounds of geoduck in a stretch of water near Fox Island in south Puget Sound.

Shellfish biologists from the Puyallup, Nisqually and Squaxin Island tribes made that discovery this fall during population survey dives to verify 26-year-old data compiled by the state. The divers found 10.6 million pounds of geoduck in an area 6 miles long and about 200 yards wide totaling about 174 acres. State figures had the amount of geoduck in the area pegged at about 746,000 pounds, said Matt Smith, Nisqually tribal shellfish biologist.

“Some patches were more dense than anything I have ever seen,” said Smith.

The surveys were conducted to update information needed for establishing harvest quotas as part of implementing the 1994 federal court ruling that affirmed treaty shellfish harvest rights of western Washington tribes.

The latest technology used in the surveys resulted in a high degree of accuracy in assessing the geoduck population. For example, laser rangefinders were used to measure distances in laying out the boundaries of the survey area.

“This shows that the tribes are good natural resource managers,” said Nancy Shippentower, Puyallup tribal natural resources policy representative. “We need to know what is happening with the resource. It is simply too important to us. It is our culture and our future.”

“As co-managers, we want to use the most current infor-



Matt Smith, Nisqually tribal shellfish biologist, holds a geoduck collected as part of a population survey in south Puget Sound. *Photo: Ian Child, Squaxin Island Tribe*

mation available. We don’t want to rely on 26-year-old data to make management decisions,” said Jim Peters, Squaxin Island Tribe natural resources manager.

Results of the survey will add about 44,000 pounds to the quotas for each of the three tribes. The state will see about 135,000 pounds available for harvest by non-Indian commercial divers.

“This is a great example of how, when tribes work together, we can greatly benefit all of our communities,” said Georgianna Kautz, Nisqually tribal fisheries manager.

The area surveyed near Fox Island and Green Point is an in-common harvest area shared by the three tribes. Additional tribal surveys are planned this summer. — *T. Meyer*

## *Tribes Investigate Seafood Markets In China*

Western Washington tribal representatives traveled to Beijing, China this fall as part of efforts to aggressively market seafood products, especially geoducks, directly to overseas and domestic buyers.

Representatives of the Suquamish and Jamestown S’Klallam tribes and Port of Seattle participated in the second annual China Fisheries and Seafood Expo which attracts seafood buyers and processors from around the world. Funding for the trip was provided by the Port of Seattle, American Seafood Institute and the two tribes.

“The main goal was to give the tribes a picture of the potential that the Asian markets have, not only on tribal geoduck harvest, but the harvest of other species as well,” said Tony Forsman, shellfish coordinator for the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. Tribal representatives who attended the exposition included Ron Allen, chairman of the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, and Kevin George, a Suquamish tribal council member and geoduck diver.

“I was overwhelmed by the number of Chinese businessmen eager to work with Indian tribes,” said Allen. “Tribes have a tremendous marketing opportunity in Asia, and we need to take advantage of it,” he said.

“This trade show really opened my eyes to the opportunities that exist for seafood marketing in Asia,” said George. “The next goal will be to develop a marketing plan that will allow us to take advantage of this opportunity.”

Thrilled by the prospect of directly marketing seafood products to China and the rest of Asia, the two tribes will investigate a joint venture arrangement through which they will market some or all of their geoduck harvest.

In addition to meeting with seafood industry representatives, the tribal officials also met with government officials from the country’s Ministry of Fisheries.

Forsman said the Port of Seattle’s assistance was key to making the trip possible.

# *Fish Get A Lift From Students*

The Stillaguamish Tribe, the U.S. Navy and about 9,000 wild coho salmon fingerlings got a nice lift from Trafton Elementary School's fourth-graders recently.

It was a hands-on learning experience as the excited youngsters made trip after trip with fingerling-filled buckets, helping the tribe and Navy transfer the year-old fish from a tanker truck to hatchery raceways at the Jim Creek Naval Radio Station. The Navy's small fish-rearing facility is located some 10 miles east of Arlington.

"Mostly it's an educational experience -- the kids get to learn something about salmon," said Stillaguamish enhancement biologist Kip Killebrew. "But we also get some nice help."

The native fish were raised in a cooperative effort through the Stillaguamish Tribe's native stock restoration program. Navy and tribal staff captured the wild coho at Jim Creek last year. Eggs from the fish were fertilized and reared at the tribe's Harvey Creek Hatchery.

The program helps maximize fish survival by negating poor river conditions and predation. The young fish were being moved back to Jim Creek, where

they will soon be tagged with a coded wire and released. The fish can then imprint on their native stream -- Jim Creek -- which is a major Stillaguamish River tributary.

The Stillaguamish Tribe and Navy have worked together to try and rebuild native coho runs to the Jim Creek watershed since 1990. The small Naval hatchery was dedicated in 1994 and the tribe and Navy saw the first returns from the native stock restoration program last year.

The children learned how coho salmon, the predominant salmon species in Jim Creek, hatch in April and May. After spending one to two years in fresh water, they migrate to live for one to two years in saltwater. After ma-

turing, coho make the long trip back between August and September to spawn at their birthplace. Spawning occurs from November to January and, at



Andy Cohoon, 10, of Trafton Elementary School, pours coho salmon fingerlings raised by the Stillaguamish Tribe into Jim Creek Hatchery raceways. *Photo: L. Harris*

best, 10 percent of the salmon raised in the hatchery will make it back.

— *L. Harris*

## **Non-Indians Caught Stealing Salmon, Crab From Tribal Fishers**

It would have been easier – and less expensive – for Mark Stangler to have stopped at a supermarket and buy a few fish. Instead, the non-Indian Seabeck resident stands accused of stealing two coho salmon from a tribal gillnet in Hood Canal on Sept. 26. He faces gross misdemeanor charges of theft of salmon from a tribal net and participation in an Indian fishery, which could net him up to two years in jail and \$10,000 in fines if convicted.

Stangler was caught stealing fish by Sergeant Tim Reiber of the Point No Point Treaty Council Fisheries Enforcement Division, who was patrolling the Seabeck area during tribal coho fisheries.

Theft from Indian nets is a common occurrence, Reiber said, but catching the thieves is pretty rare. Fishing areas are often

remote, and illegal activity often takes place at night. PNPTC's seven full-time enforcement officers patrol 1,250 river miles and 2,250 square miles of marine waters.

It was Reiber's second encounter of the week with non-Indian poachers. On Sept. 22, Reiber caught Christian Gott and Eric Mueller, both of Poulsbo, allegedly pulling up crab pot after crab pot in Squamish Harbor, just south of the Hood Canal Floating Bridge.

The two were arrested for participating in a treaty fishery, and unlawfully operating crab pots not belonging to them – both gross misdemeanors. The pair also faced additional charges.

The crab were released back into Squamish Harbor.

— *D. Williams*

# Solutions Sought As Flooding Worsens

Opinions on how to curb flooding problems on the Skokomish River are as varied as the flavors of milkshakes served at the Purdy Canyon Drive-In, a local hangout that gets its foundation soggy whenever the river leaps its banks.

Should dikes be strengthened? Or, should they be removed, some residents bought out, and the river allowed to make its own way to saltwater?

And how will potential fixes for the river affect the salmon, trout, and other fish the Skokomish Indian Tribe has relied upon for thousands of years?

Marty Ereth, a habitat biologist for the Skokomish Tribe, said much of the watershed has been heavily logged, and many road failures have brought more mud and gravel into the river than it can naturally flush.

Ereth said dikes along the river act as big dams, retaining gravel within the system. The water slows down, and all of the gravel and other material drops out of the water column.

All of these factors have led to a raised river. The riverbed is actually four to eight feet higher than the surrounding valley in some places, Ereth said.

At one of its many bends, the river has been wearing down a main dike and Ereth believes the structure could break.

“The river is trying to reestablish some of its old patterns,” Ereth said, adding that 18 homes and three fish hatcheries are in the path of the water’s most likely new course.

Some county and state officials think the river needs more structures, like dikes and gravel traps to help keep the river in its channel. The tribe believes the answer to the Skokomish lies in the opposite direction – fewer man-made structures in the river, and fewer people living on its banks.

“Probably the best solution is to let people farm here, but not live here,” Ereth said.



Marty Ereth, Skokomish habitat biologist, surveys a portion of the Skokomish River that has been susceptible to flooding.

*Photo: D. Williams*

— D. Williams

# Tribes, State Gather To Discuss Elk Management

“We have always got to remember that we are mankind, the highest order of life. As such, we are stewards. We have to manage things well.”

With those words, Port Gamble S’Klallam elder Ted George welcomed representatives from nine Olympic Peninsula tribes and key state officials, including members of the state Fish and Wildlife Commission and WDFW Director Bern Shanks, to a hunting potlatch Sept. 19 in the Quileute tribal community of LaPush.

Treaty Indian tribes and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife have worked together for many years as co-managers to determine how best to save and restore salmon stocks. That same process has been going on for the past year for elk management on the Olympic Peninsula, and the potlatch was an opportunity for the co-managers to get together and learn about each other.

“The elk management team on the Olympic Peninsula is the perfect ex-

ample of what we need to adopt for the rest of the state,” Shanks said.

Sally Nickelson, director of the Point No Point Treaty Council wildlife management program, said elk populations on the Peninsula are in a precarious condition, and can be driven down to critically low levels by both legal hunting and poaching.

“Once elk populations get low, they’re very hard to rebuild,” she said.

In keeping with tribal tradition, guests to the potlatch were regaled with gifts, including blankets, paddles, prints, and other items.

The Quileute Tribe’s dance troupe performed several ancient dances, includ-



Quileute dancers perform a traditional dance depicting a successful elk hunt. *Photo: D. Williams*

ing one depicting a tribal hunter stalking elk through the forest, rejoicing when his spear strikes true, and carrying his prey back to the village.

“The potlatch was a tremendous historic event that provided an important opportunity for the tribes and the state to learn and better understand each other,” said Bonita Cleveland, Quileute tribal hunting coordinator.

— D. Williams

# Ear Bones Examined In Hunt For Strays

Combing the Snohomish river system the last two autumns, the Tulalip Tribes are on the look-out for stray chinook.

The tribe wants to know if there is legitimacy to concerns that hatchery fish may sometimes stray into natural spawning areas and intermingle with a river system's native runs, thereby affecting the assessment of wild run sizes and possibly genetic makeup. Little hard data exists to show the extent to which this may be a problem.

"People are making a lot of assumptions about hatchery fish straying into natural areas. We thought we'd better get some hard data rather than relying on speculation," said Kit Rawson, Tulalip harvest management biologist.

By collecting the ear bones of spawned out chinook carcasses, the Tulalip Natural Resources Department and the state Department of Fish and Wildlife expect they'll soon learn if any hatchery-produced fish are straying into the river system to spawn naturally. The samples are sent to a state laboratory in Olympia for analysis, but the results aren't expected back until February.

The research will also be important to calculating escapement levels (the number of fish allowed to return and perpetuate the run) of naturally-produced chinook, so that fish managers



Harvest management technician Richard Young takes an otolith sample from a chinook salmon as part of a Tulalip research project to see if hatchery fish are straying into wild spawning areas. *Photo: L. Harris*

can develop an effective recovery plan in the event chinook stocks are included in Endangered Species Act listings. Puget Sound wild chinook are among salmon species under "extinction-risk" review and could join the list as early as January.

Tribal and state fisheries technicians collect the ear bones, or otoliths, be-

cause the otoliths on chinook originating at Tulalip Hatchery or the state's Wallace River Hatchery are mass marked. The hatcheries use dramatic changes in incubation water temperature, which place discernable marks on the otoliths of developing embryos. Something like fingerprints, the otolith marks are permanent and laboratory analysis can distinguish individual hatchery stocks.

The research project is part of balancing the tribe's goal of restoring wild runs with its desire to produce and catch hatchery fish. Due to dramatic declines in stock productivity, the allowable harvest rates on natural stocks have dropped to the point where the Tulalip fisheries department keeps most of the tribe's usual and accustomed fishing area closed to salmon fishing. As partial compensation for the loss of fishing opportunity, the tribe operates the hatchery, which releases about 1.5 million chinook salmon fingerlings per year into Tulalip Bay. The returning adults contribute to treaty and non-treaty commercial harvests, as well as a popular Tulalip Bay recreational fishery.

"We want to protect wild chinook stocks while continuing to responsibly produce fish for harvest from our hatchery," Rawson said.

— L. Harris

## Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

6730 Martin Way East  
Olympia, WA 98506  
(360) 438-1180

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