

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

NEWS



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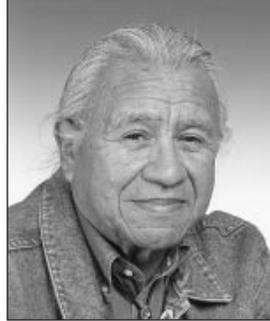
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Smith Bill Political Grandstanding

By Billy Frank Jr.
NWIFC Chairman

“The Deer and Elk Protection Act” (HR 3987) recently introduced by U.S. Rep. Linda Smith is an obvious effort to build political momentum on the backs of tribal members.



The bill, referred to the U.S. House Committee on Resources, may not even get a hearing. But the very fact that it has been introduced speaks volumes about the priority assigned to such concepts as truth and justice where politics is concerned.

The tribal harvest of deer and elk comprises only about 5 percent of the total hunt in the state of Washington. That is only a small fraction of the state-sanctioned sport hunt. But perhaps the most hypocritical omission from this bill is the enormous impact that habitat loss has on deer and elk resources.

When tribes entered into treaties with the federal government, we gave up millions of acres of land for settlement. But we kept the right to hunt on "open and unclaimed" lands throughout the region. Each treaty tribe, as a sovereign government, develops its own hunting regulations governing tribal members. Seasons are set based on the needs of our people and the ability of the resource to support harvest. If a tribal

hunter is found in violation of tribal regulations, he is cited into tribal court. Penalties can include fines and loss of hunting privileges, and our enforcement is exemplary.

Tribal members do not hunt for “sport”, but rather to meet ceremonial and sustenance needs. Deer and elk are elements of feasts that are part of traditional tribal ceremonies. Unemployment is high on many reservations, which means deer and elk provide important nutrition to many families, just as they have for thousands of years.

The tribes and state Department of Fish and Wildlife work closely to cooperatively manage wildlife resources. Tribes also conduct and participate in a variety of cooperative efforts, such as population surveys and habitat enhancement projects, that aid wildlife management in the state.

The proposed bill does nothing to help the resource. It only serves to divide people and make the job of managing these resources more difficult. It also increases the likelihood that we will have to resolve these issues in federal court.

Congresswoman Smith says the bill is aimed at protecting and conserving deer and elk in the state by requiring treaty tribal hunters to follow state regulations while hunting off-reservation. In truth, HR 3987 is simply political grandstanding by the Third District congresswoman who is seeking a Senate seat.

On The Cover: A Quinault Indian Nation fisherman checks his net recently near the mouth of the Quinault River. He reported poor luck that day, a reflection of the general trend for fishermen seeking sockeye salmon. Steelhead returns, however, have been better on the coast than in Puget Sound. *Photo: D. Preston*

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission News

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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
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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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Tribal Hatchery Releases Top 39 Million

Puget Sound and coastal treaty Indian tribes released more than 39 million hatchery fish in 1997, according to recently compiled statistics.

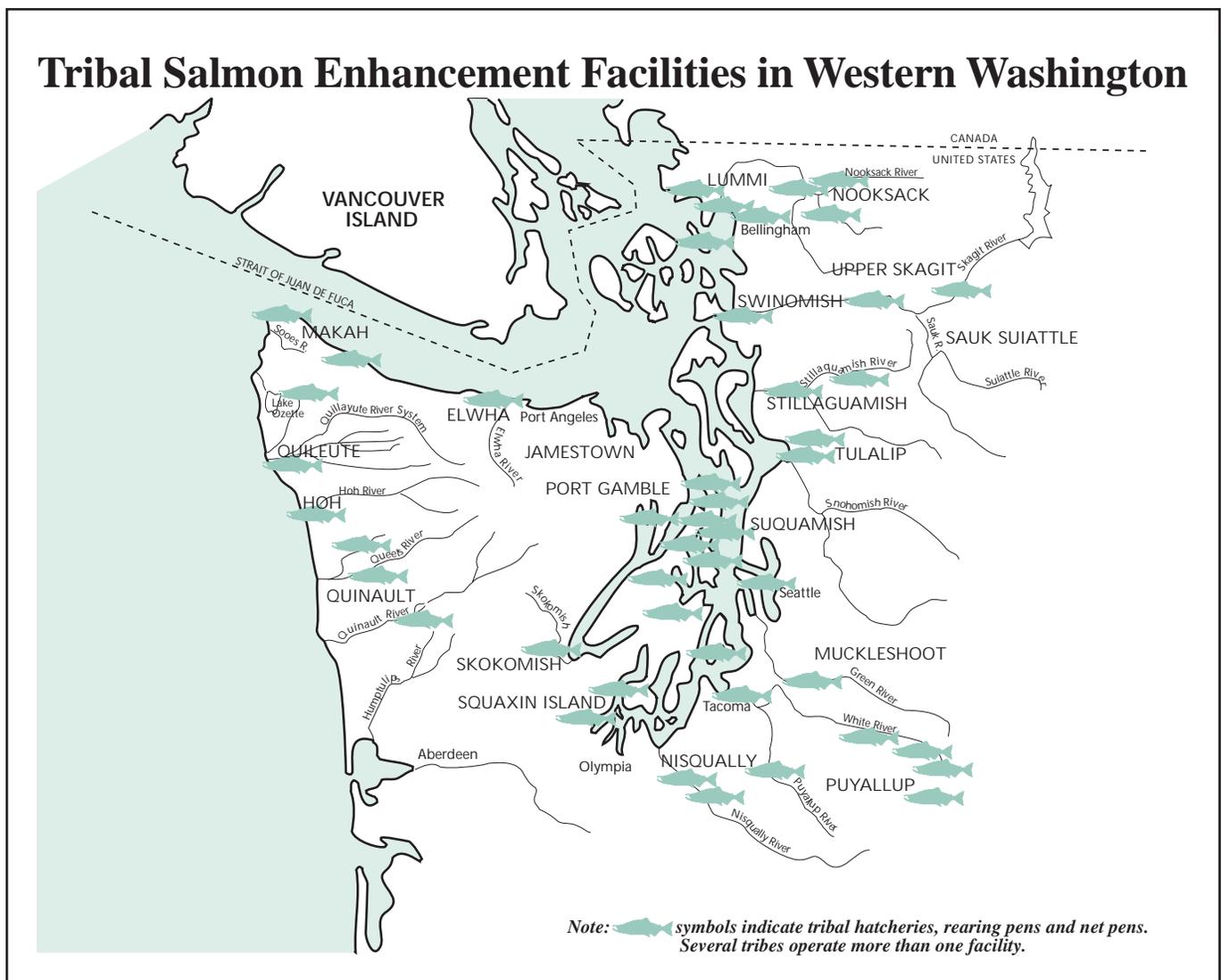
Released on streams and rivers throughout western Washington, the fish are harvested by both Indian and non-Indian, commercial and sport fishermen. "Everyone benefits from the tribes' fisheries enhancement efforts," said Billy Frank Jr., chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

Of the 39,956,706 fish released, 15.2 million were fall chinook, 11.1 million were chum, 10.9 were coho, 1.2 million were spring/summer chinook, and 1.2 million were steelhead. The Makah tribal hatchery produced all of the 266,295 sockeye released. Some of the fish were produced through cooperative enhancement efforts of the tribes, state Department of Fish and Wildlife, state Regional Enhancement Groups, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and sport or community organizations.

"Tribal hatchery production helps provide meaningful harvest opportunities for Indian and non-Indian fishermen," said Frank. He emphasized that the goal of tribal hatchery production is to supplement, not replace, wild salmon stocks. Dams, agricultural and forest practices, urbanization, past overfishing and other factors have contributed to the decline of wild salmon and steelhead populations, he said.

Modern hatchery practices help minimize potential harm to wild stocks. These include strict disease control policies and carefully timed releases that minimize competition for food and habitat between hatchery and wild fish.

Meanwhile, the tribes and state, as co-managers of the salmon resource, are working together and with other agencies and groups to restore and protect wild salmon stocks and their habitat.



Tribal Diggers Return To Bangor Beach

Tribes, Navy Negotiate Harvest Agreement

It had been more than half a century since Indian tribes harvested shellfish from the Bangor region of Hood Canal. Since 1942, when the Navy began storing and handling munitions there, Bangor's shellfish bounty has been off-limits and available only to military personnel and their dependents.

Not any longer. The Navy has essentially turned a seven-acre beach over to Point No Point Treaty Council tribes for their exclusive use at what is now officially called Naval Submarine Base Bangor and home to eight nuclear submarines. The first tribal shellfish harvest occurred May 13.

The tribes made it on to Bangor's shellfish-laden beaches after negotiations between the Navy and PNPTC representatives. The talks were based on Judge Edward Rafeedie's 1994 federal court ruling re-establishing the tribes as co-managers of shellfish resources throughout usual and accustomed harvest areas in western Washington.

'Never has there been a portion of the beach or a dig that would have been exclusively for tribal members here at Bangor.'

— Tom James,
base wildlife biologist

"The tribes and the Navy decided to negotiate a fishery based on a 50-50 harvest sharing agreement as was laid out in the Rafeedie Decision," said Lisa Veneroso, PNPTC shellfish program manager. "The tribes con-



Arnold Fulton, Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, hauls a full sack of clams from a beach set aside for exclusive tribal use at the Naval Submarine Base Bangor. Photo: D. Williams

ducted clam and oyster population surveys on all of the tidelands at Bangor, and based on those numbers the division was made."

The tribes have exclusive access to one very productive tideland, and the Navy has exclusive harvest on all other tidelands. The tribes' beach, approximately seven acres, has about 11,000 pounds of clams and about 500,000 oysters available for harvest this year. The agreement has no sunset date and will continue until either side terminates it.

"Never has there been a portion of the beach or a dig that would have been exclusively for tribal members here at Bangor," said Tom James, base wildlife biologist. "But any tribal members who were ever in the Navy and their dependents could come here with other Naval personnel and their dependents and harvest shellfish," he said.

Hood Canal-region tribes have had a successful relationship with area Navy representatives. The Point No Point treaty tribes and the Suquamish Indian Tribe have been harvesting clams from beaches on Indian Island near Port Townsend for eight years.

The Navy operates a munitions storage facility on the island. As is the case with many Indian Island beaches, the Bangor beaches are flat-out loaded with shellfish.

"You can tell this is a good beach because it's really quiet — everyone's too busy digging to talk," noted Mike Jones Jr., Point No Point Treaty Council shellfish technician, who on May 13 monitored the first harvest. By the time the mud had settled, the tribal diggers harvested more than 4,900 pounds of manila clams in one day. Two days of oyster picking reaped a harvest of 106,000 oysters for 49 tribal members.

"The tribes have exclusive management control of the beach," Veneroso added. "They don't have to coordinate harvest times or implement management regimes that accommodate multiple harvest groups. The current management plan calls for a sustainable shellfish program, and there are plans to conduct clam enhancement projects there."

Those projects could include gravelling, reseeding the beach, and installing netting to protect juvenile clams from predators such as starfish and birds.

— D. Williams

Tiny Crab Could Pose Big Problem

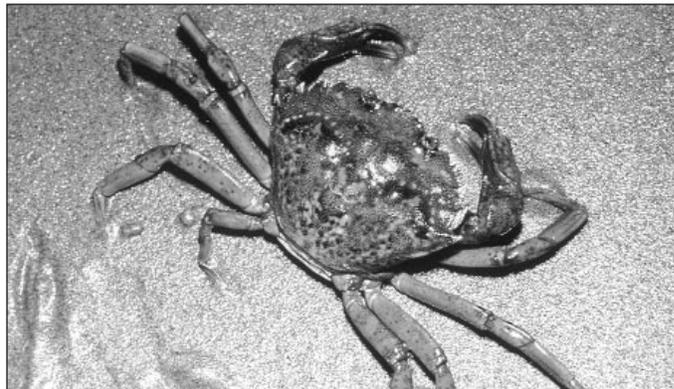
As far as predators go, the European green crab doesn't look all that imposing. Just a few inches in length, it's difficult to imagine this small crustacean posing a threat to the Pacific Coast's multi-million dollar shellfish industry.

But it does pose a threat. With its ability to reproduce in vast numbers, a voracious appetite, and a staggering array of food sources, the European green crab has fisheries managers along the West Coast concerned that, unless checked, the little crab could overrun local species – including valuable commercial species such as Dungeness crabs and littleneck clams.

Western Washington fisheries experts gathered in Portland in February to discuss the pending threat of the much-traveled crab and other invasive species.

Despite its small size, the European green crab is a giant of the predator world. A female can produce up to 200,000 eggs at a time. It is known to eat more than 150 different types of animal and plant life, and can live upwards of three months without food. The crab thrives in both fresh and sea water. They can even withstand freezing temperatures.

Known as the coyote of the crab world for its ability to adapt to new and changing surroundings, the crab was accidentally introduced to the West Coast in crates of lobster shipped from the northeastern U.S. to San Francisco. The lobster were packed in seaweed containing young green crab, and when restaurant workers tossed the seaweed into the bay, the crab established its claw-hold in the Pacific. The crab has made its way to Coos Bay on the Oregon



Invasive green crabs have decimated local shellfish populations in northern California and are migrating north. *Photo: Copyright, Gregory C. Jensen*

the green crab was first sighted there in 1993. Greg Jensen, a fisheries biologist at the University of Washington's School of Fisheries, said some shellfish growers have lost about one third of their juvenile clams to green crab predation. Jensen is headed to Bodega Bay to study the crab's impact on local shellfish populations.

Perhaps the only good news about the crab is that it can't tolerate wave action and therefore won't pose a threat to Pacific Ocean marine resources, Jensen said. Clams, crab and other sea life in protected bays and estuaries, however, are at risk from invasive green crab populations.

The fact that the crab can travel from area to area with such ease still has western Washington fisheries biologists concerned.

"We really don't have any idea when the crab could arrive here," said Richard Childers, shellfish biologist for the Point No Point Treaty Council. "It could be here tomorrow, or it could be here in five years."

Tribal fisheries managers are already preparing for the crab's arrival. Point No Point Treaty Council shellfish biologist Lisa Veneroso said biologists and technicians who conduct shellfish population surveys and monitor clam and oyster harvests will receive training on identifying the European green crab.

The prospect of securing federal funding to combat the animal through the National Invasive Species Act of 1996 has led state and tribal fisheries managers to develop an aquatic nuisance species action plan. The plan's goal is to have programs and processes in place that minimize the risk of further nuisance species introductions into Washington and halt their spread.

Legislative solutions have been sought to slow the invasion. Washington State lawmakers last year asked President Clinton and Congress for help in dealing with the European green crab and other invasive species. Lawmakers wanted funds to implement the Non-Indigenous Aquatic Nuisance Prevention and Control Act of 1990 and the National Invasive Species Act of 1996.

— D. Williams

'It could be here tomorrow, or it could be here in five years.'

— Richard Childers,
shellfish biologist,
Point No Point Treaty Council

coast in just eight years, and the outlook for shellfish there isn't good. There were unconfirmed reports in early June of a molted green crab shell — the external skeleton that crabs shed each spring — found in Willapa Bay on Washington's extreme southern coast.

The animal has had an impact on every estuary it has colonized. In Bodega Bay, Calif., for instance, there were significant reductions in clam and crab populations since

Quinault Guides Offer Unique Angling Trips

Quinault tribal fishing guide Jim “Benny” Benavidez, 50, loves his “office.”

Towering sitka spruce, big leaf maple and hemlock thrust toward a cobalt blue sky as he maneuvers his custom boat along the lower Quinault River. Upstream, a herd of perhaps 70 elk emerges from the trees and swims across the river. It’s clear why Benavidez has named his boat and business “Memory Maker.”

Benavidez is one of many Quinault tribal member guides who give non-Indians the unique opportunity of fishing the 27 miles of wild river within the Quinault Reservation.

The rewards include the relaxed, uncrowded conditions on the river as well as a good chance of a successful fishing trip. Stocks of prized salmon, both wild and hatchery, are relatively healthy thanks to the work of the Quinault Fisheries Management Department and the absence of human development along the river.

Aberdeen resident Skip Untersheher has hired Benavidez as a guide for eight years. The two are more friends now than customer and guide. Untersheher loves the wild nature of the river and its unpredictability.

“I’ve fished a lot of rivers and I just love this one. It’s one of the last wild rivers and you never know what you might see. Other rivers are either fished out or really crowded and it’s just so peaceful here. I always want to come back and there’s the knowledge that there are still some really big fish in here,” Untersheher said.

One of the sweetest prizes awaiting a fisherman is the possibility of hooking the blueback, or Quinault sockeye. Many fishermen would trade a large steelhead for the smaller sockeye.

On a recent trip, Benavidez moved Untersheher up and down the river, starting at dawn and finishing late in the afternoon. Untersheher finished tired but elated about his experience. He hooked six fish, losing two, releasing two and keeping a sockeye and a 15-pound steelhead.

“Even if I don’t catch any fish, it’s always a great day on the river. Benny’s a great guy and we can always talk about the old stories,” Untersheher said.



Quinault Indian Nation fishing guide Jim ‘Benny’ Benavidez, congratulates client Skip Untersheher for his catch. Benavidez is one of many guides who take non-Indian clients on the lower Quinault River. *Photo: D. Preston*

For Benavidez and other Quinault tribal members, the guide business allows them to do a job they love, even when the weather is lousy.

“You have to love this job to succeed. Some days it’s rainy, cold and miserable and it’s 16-hour days. I get up at 4 a.m. and I’m still cleaning up the boat at 6 p.m., but I love it. I can’t think of any other job I would want to do,” Benavidez said.

Benavidez is more or less booked for years to come, as most of his customers return year after year. But there are many Quinault tribal guides available to show visitors the wonders of eagles soaring over the river, elk, bear and usually, several fish souvenirs. A tribal guide is required; a list is available from the Quinault Natural Resources Department. Opportunities to fish or just cruise the river exist year-round.

“All my clients say they want my job,” Benavidez said with a chuckle.

— *D. Preston*

First Salmon Ceremony Binds Children, Elders

The Quileute children were the focus of the First Salmon Ceremony in LaPush this year.

The strength of the Quileute cultural programs was displayed for the elders as dozens of children sang ancient songs and danced prior to participating in the First Salmon Ceremony April 29. The day began Elders Week, which celebrates and honors the elders each year.

The First Salmon Ceremony honors the First Salmon, a salmon scout for the Salmon People. Tribal legend teaches that if he is well received and treated, he will return to his salmon people and bring them back to tribal waters in abundance.

Lillian Pullen, 87, passed her knowledge of the ceremony on to relatives Sharon Pullen and Rosalie Guerrero so they could conduct it this year. Pullen, a cultural cornerstone of the tribe, assisted children with cedar weaving and regaled them with stories as they came up to hug her.

Lillian Pullen watched with pride as her kin walked in front of a parade of children with the salmon to the water's edge after saying a prayer. The salmon was given to children in a canoe piloted by Quileute tribal member Tom Jackson. After paddling out from the dock, the salmon was returned to the river by floating the platform of salmon on the water, then tipping it to return it to its home.

"Each family and the school hold their own First Salmon Ceremony as well," said Tom Jackson.



Quileute tribal member Tom Jackson pushes the canoe out as part of the First Salmon Ceremony held in LaPush. *Photo: D. Preston*

"The feeding of the river will help heal feelings of hurt and loss and bring different tribes together," said tribal member Beverly Jackson.

For Chris Morganroth III, the ceremony is a reminder of the work that remains to be done to bring back the salmon.

"It's been tough year for the salmon. Our chinook go to Alaska where the fishing effort has tripled since the Boldt Decision. This mutes a lot of our conservation efforts here, plus there is the interception of our coho in Canada. There is a lot of work to do," Morganroth said.

— *D. Preston*

Tribes Elect NWIFC Officers At Annual Meeting

Billy Frank Jr. was re-elected to a three-year term as chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. Elections were held at the commission's recent annual meeting in Bellingham. Frank, 67, is a Nisqually tribal member who has served as chair of the commission for 18 years.

Lorraine Loomis was re-elected to a one-year term as vice-chair of the NWIFC. Loomis, a Swinomish tribal member, is manager of her tribe's fisheries program.

Bob Kelly, a Nooksack tribal member, was elected to a one-year term as treasurer. Kelly is director of the

Nooksack Tribe's natural resources department.

Jim Harp, Quinault, was recognized for his years of service to the NWIFC. Harp has served as vice-chair, treasurer and as a commissioner for nearly two decades.

Elk Studies Will Aid Management

The Muckleshoot Tribe has begun a pair of elk studies to collect data that will result in better management of elk herds in the Green and White river watersheds, as well as throughout the region. The two studies arose from tribal concern about declining elk populations and poor calf survival.

The adjacent watersheds provide for a strong comparative study. The Green River watershed has strict public access rules and limited hunting, compared to the White River watershed, which is becoming increasingly urbanized.

In 1994 there were 600 to 700 elk in the Green River watershed. By 1997 that number had declined to 200 to 300. Documented harvest during that time accounted for only about 160 animals, leaving hundreds of elk unaccounted for. Elk populations also have declined in the White River watershed, but have not been as dramatic, in part because of substantially better calf survival. Cougar and bear predation, habitat changes, weather, poaching, hunting and other factors are all being examined as possible contributors to the population declines.

“We have cut back and cut back in our harvest to the point where our hunters are restricted to one elk per household, and this has not slowed the elk decline,” said Pete Jerry, chairman of the tribe’s hunting committee. “It is time to collect scientific data so we can identify the factors responsible for the decline and then do something about those factors.”

In one of the largest studies of its kind on the West Coast, 56 cow elk in the two watersheds were captured and fitted with radio collars. Among other

objectives, the collared animals will be used to develop a model to estimate population size. With the aid of the radio collars, biologists can also track elk movements in the watersheds to determine where and when they are using particular habitat. The study also will help biologists determine what proportion of elk die from various causes and what time of year those deaths occur. This information will aid in setting hunting regulations to ensure that the herds are not over-hunted.

Elk captured in the study were assessed for pregnancy, disease, parasites, and overall health. This information helps determine whether habitat quantity or quality is limiting herd growth. State-of-the-art field techniques were used to help determine the condition of the captured elk. An ultrasound machine, for example, was used to determine the amount of body fat on each animal. It was the first time the technique had been used in the field on elk, said David Vales, Muckleshoot wildlife biologist. “The Muckleshoot Tribe wants to be a technical leader in applying body condition assessment in the field so that we can assess the importance that habitat plays in the health of these elk,” he said.

Cooperators in the study include the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Tacoma Public Utilities, Weyerhaeuser Co., Plum Creek Timber Co., Guistina Resources, Washington Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Forest Service, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Volunteers participating in the study included members of Washington Citizens for Wildlife and the Kitsap Bow Hunters.

The second study, this one aimed at young elk, began recently in the Green River watershed. Calves of cow elk collared in the watershed as part of the earlier study will be captured and fitted with radio ear tags to help determine the cause and timing of calf mortality.

Calf productivity is extremely low in the Green River watershed, with just seven to 12 calves per 100 cows surviving through the winter. In the White River watershed, calf productivity is closer to normal, with 30 to 35 calves per 100 cows surviving through the winter. Any ratio below 30 is cause for concern and limits hunting opportunity, Vales said.

Calf birth weights will be obtained to determine the nutritional status of the Green River herd. This data, combined with information on cow condition and calf mortality patterns developed from the earlier study, will yield a clearer picture of whether habitat or predators are most affecting the herd, Vales said.

The two studies are only a small part of the pro-active efforts of the Muckleshoot Tribe in its approach to wildlife management, Jerry said. Strict tribal hunting regulations, accurate and timely harvest data collection, a strong enforcement program, and close monitoring of tribal hunters are also part of the program that is aimed at ensuring long-term sustainable and harvestable populations of game are available for all user groups.

“These animals are part of who we are as a people,” said Jerry. “We have always depended on them. As a caretaker of these resources, we are committed to ensuring their health and survival.”

SSC Tribes Boost Chum Escapement

“Mimicking nature” may not be your first guess when you see Upper Skagit tribal member Lorne Boome lugging a white plastic bucket laden with chum salmon fry from a tanker truck to a Skagit River slough.

But that’s what Boome -- a fisheries technician for Skagit System Cooperative (SSC) -- is trying to accomplish as he boosts one of the Skagit’s worst native chum escapement years on record by helping release some 200,000 fingerlings in various sloughs between Lyman and Hamilton.

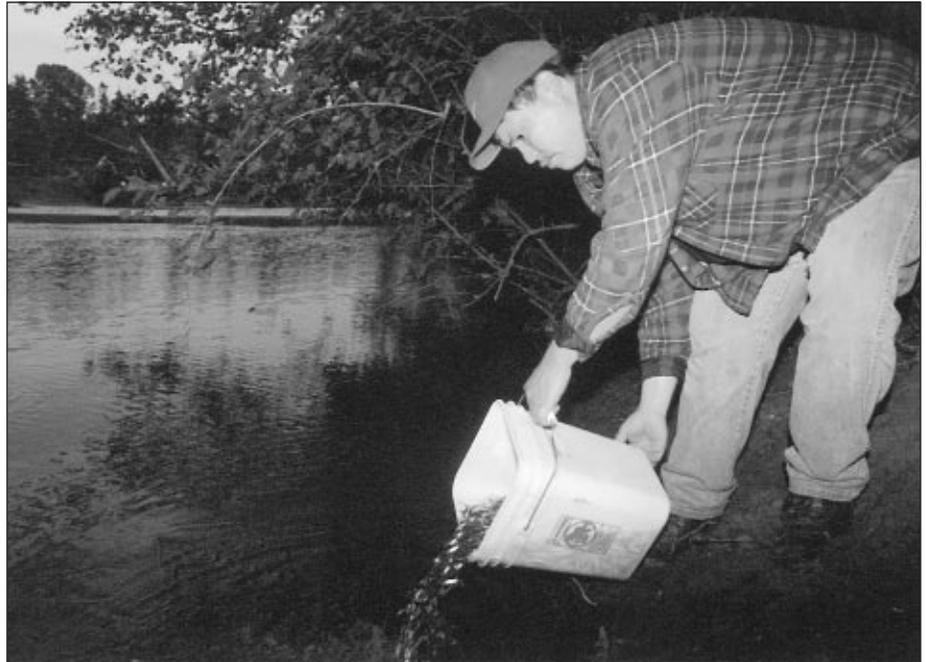
The Skagit River chum escapement (the number of fish returning to spawn and perpetuate the run) goal was 60,000 fish for 1997, but spawning surveys indicate the return was closer to 11,000. The miserable return on a normally robust chum run was blamed on environmental conditions like El Nino that led to poor ocean survival. Flooding that may have damaged spawning grounds three and four years ago is also suspected.

“Last year’s poor chum return was a good example of how adverse environmental conditions can impact wild salmon runs,” said Upper Skagit Hatchery manager Scott Schuyler. “Until environmental conditions improve we will continue our enhancement efforts on the native salmon runs.”

To bump up escapement as naturally as possible, SSC -- the fisheries management consortium of the Swinomish, Upper Skagit and Sauk-Suiattle tribes -- raised the fry from wild chum broodstock. By broodstocking captive wild chum, SSC can produce many more fry than can be accomplished naturally while also protecting the genetic diversity of the wild fish.

SSC managed to collect fewer than 200 adult spawners (the goal was 500) for the program last November and December during what turned out to be a disastrous fishing season for its tribal members. In a good season, the tribal gillnet catch will reach 33,000 pounds or more; last winter the catch was under 8,000 pounds.

“I’ve been fishing the Skagit for the last 18 years and have never seen the fishing be as poor as last year,” said Schuyler. “The Upper Skagit Tribe has historically relied on the returning chum to be the largest part of our commer-



Lorne Boome, SSC fisheries technician, releases young chum salmon into a slough along the Skagit River. *Photo: L. Harris*

cial season and the poor return was a disaster for the tribal fishermen.”

Once incubated and reared at the Upper Skagit Hatchery rearing ponds, the small silver-green fry were placed into a 200-gallon tanker truck and transported up South Skagit Highway for release into the sloughs -- the natural staging and imprinting areas for young salmon before they migrate to the sea. The hope is that many of the 200,000 fish will return to spawn as adults in four years, benefiting the native run as well as Indian and non-Indian Skagit fishers.

“Every little fish helps,” Boome said. — *L. Harris*

NWIFC Web Site Has Change Of Address

The NWIFC home page has a new Internet address on the World Wide Web. The new address is www.nwifc.wa.gov.

The old address of <http://mako.nwifc.wa.gov> will still connect you to the home page, but will be phased out over the next few months. Most browsers will automatically connect you with the new address. If yours doesn't, just click on the connecting link.

The NWIFC web site offers a wide variety of information about the natural resource management activities of the treaty Indian tribes in western Washington. Information is updated and new information added regularly, so stop by and visit often.

Culprit Culverts

Tribes, County Dedicate \$1 Million To Fix Fish Passage Problems

Poorly engineered culverts are one of the biggest obstacles to wild fish production in western Washington – and also one of the easiest fixes. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) estimates more than 3,000 miles salmon and trout streams are blocked by culverts statewide. While fish barriers such as these are illegal, the law is rarely enforced.

Replacing undersized or badly constructed culverts to allow the free flow of juvenile fish to saltwater and adult fish to spawning grounds is a quick way of bolstering salmon runs. Fixes are often cost-prohibitive, but in Jefferson County the Hoh and Port Gamble S’Klallam tribes have joined the county in a million-dollar cooperative effort to replace 16 county-owned fish-blocking culverts.

Each tribe has been awarded \$250,000 in grant funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ Jobs In The Woods program. Combined with the county commissioners’ commitment to provide a dollar-for-dollar match, \$1 million or more could be budgeted over the next two years to fix culverts.

“This cooperative project would represent one of the largest efforts yet in the Pacific Northwest to fix road culverts that cut off upstream habitat for salmon, steelhead, and sea-run cutthroat trout,” said Peter Bahls, habitat biologist for the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe. “We’re on a very tight timeline, but then again, so are the salmon.”

Making previously inaccessible habitat available to fish is expected to boost by nearly 6,000 fish the total production of adult salmon and steelhead in Jefferson County, said Jill Silver, habitat biologist for the Hoh Tribe.

“Some of these road barriers have been blocking salmon runs for more than 20 years, and it’s time they were fixed,” she said. “This is the kind of proactive salmon restoration

and cooperation between governments that we need to see all over the state.”

Jefferson County is home to two salmon species – Hood Canal summer chum and Puget Sound chinook – slated for federal protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Bahls said the tribes’ success in getting these competitive grants was due to the work of the members of the Fish Passage Coalition, as well as Jefferson County’s continuing support. The fish coalition, composed of the two tribes, the Point No Point Treaty Council, and several fish restoration and environmental groups, began meeting with Jefferson County officials a year ago to request rapid repair of county road culverts blocking salmon and trout migrations.

A technical team evaluated 22 county owned road culverts previously identified as fish barriers, and made a prioritized list based on factors such as the number of fish species affected, the amount and quality of upstream habitat, and the cost of repair. The list is considered interim because WDFW is in the middle of a comprehensive survey of all country road barriers. Bahls said the survey, not due for completion until next year, will likely uncover a large number of additional barriers.

More money and labor are being contributed by Wild Olympic Salmon’s Snow Creek Quilcene River Restoration Team, which is funded through the Washington Department of Natural Resources’ Jobs For the Environment program, and the North Olympic Salmon Coalition and the Pacific Coast Salmon Coalition.



Bob Howell, Hoh Tribe habitat technician, stands in a fish-blocking culvert.
Photo: Courtesy Of Hoh Tribe

Makahs Fish For Data In Chinook Study

The Makah Tribe is undertaking a five-month study to update decades-old information about the status of ocean chinook and coho stocks.

The information will update vague data collected in the 1970s. The old data was used to create the current mathematical fishery models fisheries managers use to set ocean fishery limits for treaty and non-treaty fisheries.

Two tribal fishermen and two observers have been contracted to record the numbers of legal and sub-legal fish encountered in the ocean troll fishery. Observers will record and release sub-legal fish caught to improve knowledge of the numbers and age groups of chinook found. The study is being conducted from May to September.

Since the encounter rates are likely to be similar for Indian and non-Indian troll fishermen, the study will benefit all fishermen by improving the accuracy of the models that measure the effects of harvest. Data recorded from coho caught during the study will improve models for that species as

well. The project is important because it will help to more accurately reflect the effects of the treaty troll fishery on Endangered Species Act-listed Columbia River chinook as well as other chinook stocks of concern.

“We believe the fishery has probably changed significantly since that time and that it’s important to have much better data about these populations. Our assumption is that the size of the runs, size of the fish and maybe the timing of the runs has changed,” said Russ Svec, Makah Tribal fisheries manager. “Any or all of these changes could result in changes to encounter rates which are not currently incorporated into modeling or into management decisions.”

The \$60,000 study is being funded by a competitive grant awarded to the tribe by the Pacific Salmon Commission.

“The idea is that over time, this new, better information will slowly replace the old information and that the models that we base catch limits on will be more reliable,” Svec said.



Makah tribal fishermen Bob Butler, left, examines his catch that is part of the tribe's encounter rates study. Photo: D. Preston

Passages

Oliver 'Bosco' Charles

An estimated 500 family and friends gathered April 28 in the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe's gymnasium to say goodbye to Oliver "Bosco" Charles, founder of the Lower Elwha Shaker Church, and a prominent figure in many aspects of Lower Elwha Klallam reservation life.



Oliver 'Bosco' Charles

Bosco died April 24, 1998 at age 64. A fisherman, hunter, and a logger, he was a former vice chairman of the Lower Elwha Tribal Council and, at the time of his death, was chairman of the hunting committee, a member of the fisheries committee,

and a board member of the Lower Elwha Tribal Health and Enrollment committees.

Bosco researched his tribe's natural resources treaty rights – hunting and shellfishing. His words were recently included in the tribe's fishing ordinances: “We have always had these rights since treaty times, and we have had to fight for each and every one since the signing of the treaties,” he wrote.

His participation in the day-to-day functions of the tribe, as well as his concern for the well-being of tribal members, was what set Bosco apart from others, said Frances Charles, secretary of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe.

The tribe honored him in the spring of 1996 when it officially renamed a stream flowing through the reservation Bosco Creek. He was on-hand at the dedication ceremony and watched with obvious pride as the tribal youth re-introduced chum salmon into the recently restored creek.

Tribes Adopt Cautious Fisheries Package

Western Washington Treaty Indian tribes adopted another extremely conservative package of fisheries regulations for 1998 that will protect weak stocks of chinook and coho salmon. The tribes developed their 1998 fisheries package in concert with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, during the federal Pacific Fishery Management Council meetings in Portland. The package addresses ocean, Strait of Juan de Fuca and Puget Sound fisheries.

“For several years now, we have cut our treaty-protected fisheries in response to weak stock situations, and this year is no exception,” said Billy Frank Jr., chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. “Returns are at historically low levels, and we have shaped our fisheries to reflect that fact.”

Tribal fisheries in the Strait of Juan de Fuca and northern Puget Sound will target sockeye and chum salmon, while minimizing incidental harvests of chinook and coho salmon. All other treaty fisheries in terminal areas will focus on identifiable surpluses of chinook, coho, and chum salmon.

Under the new fisheries package, the tribes will implement a system to monitor the incidental by-catch of chinook salmon in treaty sockeye fisheries in northern Puget Sound to ensure by-catch does not greatly exceed expectations. Other conservation measures taken by the tribes include changes in coho fisheries in Hood Canal to ensure the strongest possible return of Hood Canal summer chum salmon – another candidate species for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Canada, facing similar conservation problems, is expected to reduce its West Coast Vancouver Island troll fisheries for coho and chinook. This will increase the number of salmon returning to Puget Sound, but tribal fisheries managers will measure the actual returns during the season and set their fisheries levels accordingly.

“Harvest is only one aspect of salmon management,” said Frank. “Now it’s up to those who make the land-use and habitat management decisions – state and local governments, large landholders, and others – to commit toward improving the salmon’s home. Otherwise, all of the reductions we have made in our fisheries will have been wasted.”



Shrimp Haul

Steve and Vita Lauderback, Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, haul shrimp from Hood Canal’s Dabob Bay. While harvest totals appeared to be in line with pre-season expectations, fishermen reported weak prices for their catches. *Photo: D. Williams*

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

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

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