

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

NEWS



Vol. 28, No. 2

Summer 2002

www.nwifc.org



Inside:

- Dam Removal Opens Habitat
- Canoe Journey Celebrates Ancestors
- Tribes Release 30 Million Salmon
- Partnership Aids Sockeye
- Clam Die-Off Hurts Tribe
- Tribes Protect Murrelets

Tribes Will Do Their Part For Groundfish

**By Billy Frank Jr.
NWIFC Chairman**

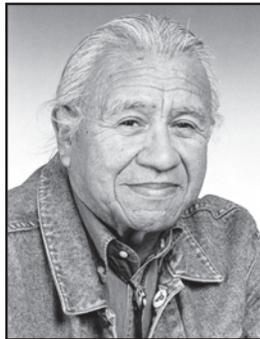
Coastal treaty tribes will be hit especially hard by the sharp reductions in groundfish harvests off the Washington coast this year.

Declining salmon runs and poor market conditions have been conspiring against the tribes for the past couple of decades. Now, just when they are beginning to access their treaty-reserved share of groundfish, deep harvest cuts must be made to address declining populations of some groundfish species.

Nonetheless, the Quileute, Hoh and Makah tribes and the Quinault Indian Nation will be doing their part to help protect and rebuild weak groundfish stocks.

The tribes will continue strict “trip limits” on their fishermen which limit the number of fish from depressed groundfish stocks that can be harvested incidentally during fisheries on healthy fish populations. Tribal fishermen targeting halibut, sablefish or whiting, for example, will be allowed only a small incidental harvest of a weak groundfish stock, such as yelloweye rockfish, before being required to stop fishing in a particular area.

The tribes also will implement additional time and location restrictions to further reduce potential effects on dwindling groundfish populations. All of the potential impacts



from the tribal groundfish fisheries fall well within the guidelines set by the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

As a manager of the groundfish resource with the federal and state governments, the tribes want to work cooperatively to address a significant lack of data on groundfish populations coastwide. The data gaps result in the need for restrictive fisheries coastwide, regardless of regional differences in the health and abundance of some groundfish stocks.

A federally funded fishery observer program is needed to improve the knowledge – and management – of coastal groundfish stocks. Observers go out on fishing boats to collect data and monitor fisheries, providing important information on the health of groundfish stocks, as well as information on levels of bycatch in fisheries targeting other species.

Better data enables managers to make better management decisions. It also allows tailoring of management plans to take into consideration the differences that exist between groundfish populations from different areas along the coast. This is especially important to the tribes, who are limited to fishing only within their treaty-defined usual and accustomed fishing areas.

In the meantime, the tribes will continue to do their part – and more.

On The Cover: One of nearly 30 canoes participating in an inter-tribal canoe journey approaches the landing area in the Quileute village of LaPush. The August event ended in Taholah, the home of the Quinault Indian Nation. *Photo: D. Preston*

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission News

The NWIFC News is published quarterly on behalf of the treaty Indian tribes in western Washington by the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, 6730 Martin Way E., Olympia, WA 98516. Complimentary subscriptions are available. Articles in NWIFC News may be reprinted. An electronic version of this newsletter is available at www.nwifc.org.

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

NWIFC Executive Director: Jim Anderson; NWIFC News Staff: Tony Meyer, Manager, Information Services Division, Emmett O'Connell, South Puget Sound Information Officer (IO); Darren Friedel, Strait/Hood Canal IO; Jeff Shaw, 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; (360) 297-6546 in Kingston; or (360) 374-5501 in Forks.

Dam's Removal Opens Miles Of Habitat

For nearly 100 years, a defunct dam across Jim Creek has served as a barrier to the passage of salmon and other fish. In August, though, the Stillaguamish Tribe opened up miles of habitat by demolishing the structure.

“This dam hasn’t been useful for most of this century,” said Shawn Yanity, vice chairman of the Stillaguamish Tribe. “By removing it, we have improved fish habitat significantly – with no loss of service to the community.” Snohomish County provided the funding for the project.

Jim Creek, a tributary to the South Fork of the Stillaguamish River, saw the dam built upon it in 1905 as a hydroelectric power source by the City of Arlington. Even then, though, the creek’s relatively mild summer flows did not provide much in the way of energy.

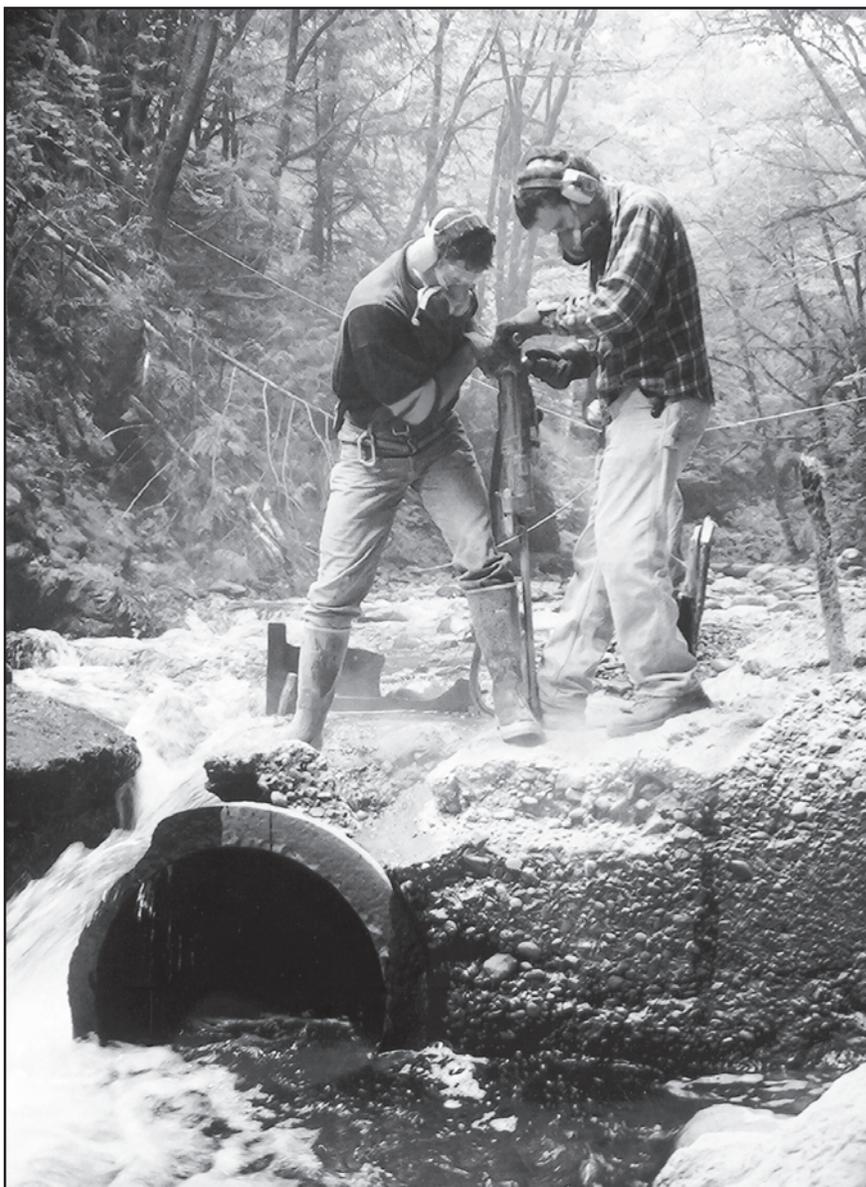
“As other power sources emerged, the dam became obsolete by the 1930s,” said Jason Griffith, biologist with the Stillaguamish Tribe. “Though it was decommissioned and the turbines removed, a portion of the dam structure has remained in the creek.”

During summer, only a small trickle of water flowed through a 12-inch-wide gap in the dam. Worse, the dam created a drop-off of approximately two feet to the water below. Though this wasn’t a complete barrier to fish passage, it did block the migration of some fish. Those that made it through also expended enough energy winning the fight with the dam to diminish their long-term prospects for survival.

“The dam constricted the channel so much that fish can only get through here safely and in solid numbers during high water,” said Griffith. “Removing the dam opens up about nine miles of mainstem habitat as well as seven miles of tributary habitat upstream.”

The project will benefit the chinook, chum and pink salmon traveling down the mainstem of the Stillaguamish River, as well as the coho salmon who favor tributaries such as Jim Creek.

The tribe spent two days demolishing the remnants of the dam on land owned by Steve Sprague, owner of Jim Creek



Preparing to remove a defunct dam on Jim Creek, staff from the Stillaguamish natural resources department jackhammer a series of holes into a the dam’s structure. Explosives were placed in the holes and the dam was demolished. *Photo: J. Shaw*

Tree Farm. Sprague has worked with the tribe on other environmental projects, such as culvert replacements.

During the first day, tribal work crews used jackhammers to break down portions of the dam and create holes in the structure. Those holes were filled with explosives and the dam was demolished Aug. 22.

“This dam has been useless to people for a long time, and it’s been harming fish all the while,” said Griffith. “Removing it was the best thing for everyone.”

– J. Shaw

Tribal Canoe Journey Celebrates Ancestors



Two greeters wrapped in button blankets were among the nearly 5,000 who welcomed the canoe journey participants in Taholah Aug. 10. *Photo: D. Preston*

More than 5,000 people celebrated tradition and culture as they welcomed 20 canoes representing 23 Indian nations to Taholah in August. For those in the audience who watched and participated in the Paddle to Seattle in 1989 – the first of the modern canoe trips – the journeys represent an important cultural renaissance.

“To me, it’s a much needed thing for Indian people to know who they are and where they come from,” said Ann Masten, a Quinault tribal member who was in the Quinault Indian Nation canoe in 1989. She said the canoe journeys and the cultural practices inherent in the task connect participants to their roots and culture. “You feel something very profound going on in your person, the kind of thing you only get from knowing your Creator and knowing who you are,” Masten said.

Participants must learn the songs and dances of their tribe, prepare spiritually, commit to being drug and alcohol free, practice with their crew and are often required to carve their own paddle.

As in the recent past, the crews ranged in age from teens to elders, an important development in the journeys that started with almost all adult crews. “It’s

great to see the youth participating and learning about their ancestors. It also teaches them respect for their past and their elders,” said Natalie Charlie, Quinault tribal member and a participant in the Seattle canoe journey. “To see the canoes together asking for permission to come ashore in Taholah, it

was like for that day, time turned back. You were back to when our ancestors were inviting visitors to come eat and celebrate with us. It’s really hard to describe that feeling,” said Charlie.

The theme for the journey this year was “Celebrating Our Ancestors,” and Rena Francis, 22, felt the powerful connection between herself and the past during the paddle. “When we punched through the waves leaving the mouth of the Hoh River, it really brought out the feeling of our ancestors being



Makah canoe skipper Brian Parker, left, shares a Kallam skipper Al Charles Jr. at the landing in LaP. *Photo: D. Preston*

close,” said Francis, a Lower Elwha Klallam tribal member. She has been on several journeys and was awed thinking about what her ancestors accomplished without all the modern conveniences canoe journeys have now, such as support boats and modern clothing.

There has been a canoe gathering every year since the first journey in 1989. Destinations have ranged from Taholah to the northern coast of British Columbia. This year, the crews experienced the sullen power of the ocean when unexpectedly high surf kicked up and fog de-



Nearly 30 canoes from Washington and Canada gathered on the beach at Taholah, home of the Quinault Indian Nation. *Photo: D. Preston*



Laugh with Lower Elwha
Tatoosh, home of the Quileute

scended near Queets, separating the canoes and their support boats and dumping some pullers into the chilly waters. Fortunately, there were no serious injuries.

But it was during the stressful hours in the fog and waves that many pullers felt the closest to their roots. “It really made me think of our ancestors,” said Quileute puller Earla Penn. “They didn’t have compasses or warm clothes. It was an

amazing feat for them to travel those long distances then.”

Another powerful moment for many was the landing of 14 canoes on Tatoosh – an island that is part of the Makah lands – which hadn’t seen that many canoes in more than a century. “It was just awesome. Someone was hollering, ‘We’re making history!’ and it was just an incredible feeling,” said Arlene “Pebbles” Wheeler, a Lower Elwha Klallam tribal member who has been on a number of the tribal journeys.

“Each time I do one of these journeys, it brings me back to being 16-years-old and the first paddle to Seattle and that indescribable amount of pride,” said Al Charles Jr., Lower Elwha Klallam skipper.

The crews made stops along the Strait of Juan de Fuca and all along the Olympic coast before ending the journey in Taholah. A number of bands from Canada participated along with tribes from Puget Sound and the Olympic coast.

The three-day celebration in Taholah included a potlatch, games and dancing in the tradition of canoe gatherings since time immemorial. “This was truly the way to honor the tradition of all the coastal people,” said Pearl Capoeman-Baller, Quinault Indian Nation chairman.

– D. Preston

Cedar Transforms Canoe, Carvers

The arrival of the “The Spirit of Elwha” in Taholah marked the joyous completion of a circle of life for the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, the canoe’s skipper and the tree that became the canoe. Skipper Al Charles Jr., 30, was also the lead carver of the canoe that less than a year ago, was a 165-tall, 10-foot wide western red cedar tree.

The tree’s transformation into a nearly 47-foot long ocean-going canoe was a spiritual commitment by Elwha tribal members Al and Darrell Charles, and Kwakiutl tribal member Harry Moon. It was one of three new canoes in this year’s journey that began in Puget Sound and ended on the Olympic Peninsula coast at Taholah. The other new canoes were from Queets (Quinault Indian Nation) and Neah Bay (Makah Tribe).

Al Charles was part of the Paddle to Seattle in 1989 and has participated annually in a canoe journey ever since. “It’s one of the few ways that I can come closest to walking in my ancestor’s footsteps, the same exact way they did it,” he said. “Even though we have a lot of technology in our favor now, you still know that you have to accept what’s going to happen when you leave the beach. Many of our ancestors left to go fishing and never came back,” Charles said.

During the carving of “The Spirit of Elwha,” a constant stream of visitors from all over the world stopped to chat on the Elwha reservation west of Port Angeles as the trio worked to complete the 47-foot long canoe.

More important than the international visitors were the tribal children and teens that also frequented the work site. They offered to help clean up the work area so the men could continue to work efficiently. Al Charles, who has been carving and painting since he was 14 years old, is never too busy to show an interested child how to use the carving tools.

“It’s gratifying to see the kids come by and their participation in the canoe journeys. I remember when I was carving the Elwha Warrior (the tribe’s previous canoe that sank in an accident several years ago), there were eight and 10 year-olds coming by. Now they are teenagers and they stopped by and talked about their memories of the first canoe,” said Al Charles. “They also pumped us up when we would get burned out.” Those children will get more chances to learn as there are plans to carve a second and possibly a third canoe from the cedar tree that gave the tribe the “Spirit of Elwha.”

– D. Preston



Principal canoe carver and skipper Al Charles Jr. shows his cousin Dale Charles how to use a carving tool on “The Spirit of Elwha.” Photo: D. Preston

Tribes Released 30 Million Salmon In 2001

Treaty Indian Tribes in western Washington released 30 million salmon from tribal hatcheries in 2001, according to recently compiled data.

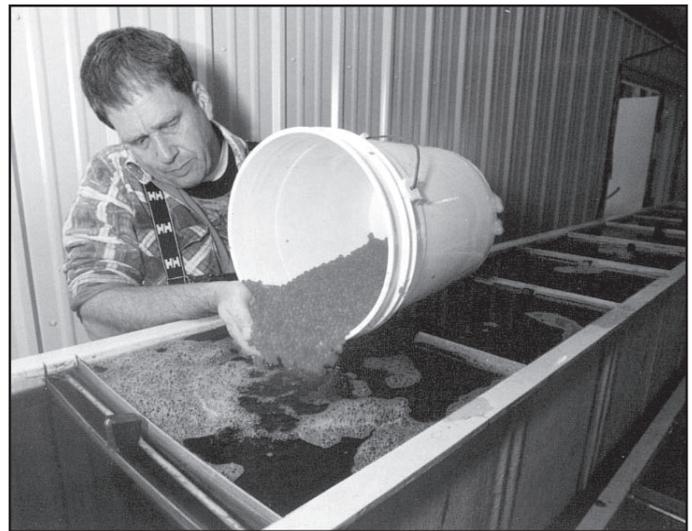
Releases included 11 million chinook, 9 million chum, 8 million coho and 1 million sockeye salmon, in addition to about 800,000 steelhead.

The number of salmon released in 2001 marks a 3 million decrease from 2000, the result of a number of factors that included budgetary constraints and changes in program priorities. Some of the salmon released were produced in cooperation with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional Fishery Enhancement Groups, and sport and community groups. Returning adults will be harvested by both Indian and non-Indian fishermen. Restrictions on fishing times, locations and gear ensure that incidental harvest of weaker wild stocks are minimal.

With the listing of two Puget Sound salmon stocks as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, tribal and state managers have put a new focus on evaluating the role of hatcheries in wild stock rebuilding efforts. For the past three years, treaty tribes have been implementing the Hatchery Reform process. Hatchery Reform is a systematic, science-driven effort to address how hatcheries can help recover and conserve naturally spawning salmon populations and support sustainable fisheries.

The Hatchery Scientific Review Group – the independent science panel component of the Hatchery Reform process – presented its first set of recommendations to improve hatchery operations earlier this year. The panel’s recommendations included:

- Using a regional approach to managing hatchery programs. It is important that hatchery programs be evaluated within the context of the regions and watersheds in which they operate and the goals set for them by managers.
- Operating hatcheries within the context of their ecosystems. The current and future status of these ecosystems, including the status of naturally spawning stocks and the environment, will determine the potential for success and limitations on any hatchery program.
- Measuring hatchery operation success in terms of contribution to harvest and conservation goals, not in terms of the number of fish produced.
- Emphasizing quality, not quantity, in hatchery production.



Rob Rhoads, technical support manager for the Quinault Indian Nation fisheries department, pours coho salmon eggs into incubators at the Nation’s Salmon River Hatchery.

Photo: D. Preston

- Incorporating flexibility into hatchery design and operation so that managers can respond quickly to changes in harvest and conservation goals and priorities, ocean conditions, stock status, freshwater habitat conditions and other factors.
- Evaluating hatchery programs regularly to ensure accountability for success.

Nineteen tribal Hatchery Reform projects received funding this year, varying from a coho smolt radio-tagging program to facility and hatchery water quality upgrades. Each tribal and state hatchery has completed a Hatchery Genetic Management Plan as well, which guide how salmon stocks and hatcheries will be managed to protect wild salmon runs. New hatchery management software also has been developed to enable electronic transfer of key hatchery information directly to tribal, state and federal agencies. Tribes also are identifying and implementing changes to salmon rearing and release strategies to reduce impacts to wild salmon.

“Hatcheries are an essential piece to the puzzle of recovering wild salmon runs,” said Billy Frank, chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission. “While hatchery production will never be able to replace fish lost to poor habitat, it is necessary. Hatchery Reform will help guide us on the road to salmon recovery.” – *T. Meyer*

Stream Typers Aid Salmon Survival

A cloud of mosquitoes follows Gene Gaddis and his crew of two as they scramble over a fallen tree in a small tributary of the Bogachiel River on the Olympic Peninsula. Swatting at the ravenous pests, the Quileute fisheries crew proceeds upstream, stopping at regular intervals to measure the width of the stream, noting tributaries and fish barriers, and checking for the presence of fish.



Gene Gaddis, left, and Rio Jaime, Quileute tribal fisheries technicians, measure the width of a stream as part of stream typing in the Bogachiel River basin. Photo: D. Preston

The crew is helping to complete the stream typing for the Bogachiel River watershed, a task that has already been accomplished for every other major watershed in the Quillayute River system. Stream typing is a system of identifying types of habitat for fish, water flows and obstacles to fish passage. Tribes, as co-managers of the salmon resource, have surveyed thousands of miles of streams, gathering fish habitat data and identifying problem areas that can be fixed to improve conditions for salmon survival.

“Without this information, it’s very difficult to identify fish blocking problems or to prioritize those areas that need to be fixed,” said Kris Northcut, fisheries biologist for the Quileute Tribe. “It takes more effort to win any grants for this kind of work without the information we get from these surveys,” he said.

The survey work is largely funded by a Jobs In the Woods grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The grant pays for several additional seasonal workers needed to complete the time-consuming task of walking up each tributary. Previous tribal survey work conducted in the watershed as of the Timber/Fish/Wildlife process revealed that in many instances streams were incorrectly typed or not identified on Washington Department of Natural Resources maps. Re-typing is deemed essential to target fish-bearing streams for proper protection and habitat restoration.

Each segment of stream is different, some wide and shallow, others swift and narrow. Crews measure the width of the stream, and the width of where the stream flows during high water. They note pools and riffles, the different types of waters important to salmon and the wetland areas associated with the streams where young salmon like to grow and take refuge in high water. The amount of forest canopy is also recorded as it is important for maintaining the cool water that salmon need to survive.

The types of vegetation streamside determine how hard the work will be in any one day. “This morning was actually pretty easy,” Gaddis notes as the crew finishes the lower segment of a stream. “This afternoon will be worse. Lots of dense brush,” he said with a shrug and a grin. They wouldn’t have it any other way.

– D. Preston

Judge Dismisses Suit Challenging Makah Whaling

A federal judge dismissed a challenge by animal welfare groups to the Makah Tribe’s whale hunts in August, leaving no court challenges on the books that might hold up a fall hunt.

U.S District Judge Franklin Burgess ruled that the whale hunt opponents failed to prove their claim that assessments performed by federal agencies were “arbitrary or capricious.”

The lawsuit was brought by the New York-based Fund for Animals; The Humane Society of the United States and other groups and individuals.

The groups sued the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), contending they had not adequately assessed the impact of the hunts on public safety and whales that linger to feed along the northwest Washington coast during the annual migration. The gray whales move between winter breeding grounds in Mexico and summer feeding grounds in Alaska.

In their final environmental assessment, NMFS found no biological difference between the whales that linger to feed in Washington and other gray whales. The population of gray whales is estimated at 18,000 animals and is considered healthy, despite recent fluctuations from as high as 26,000 animals. Scientists believe the fluctuations are natural and based on food availability.

The tribe was granted a renewal of their quota to hunt an average of four gray whales a year for five years from the International Whaling Commission in May. The new quota begins in 2003.

– D. Preston

Near Lake Quinault

Partnership A Winner For Sockeye

An experimental project featuring a partnership between the Quinault Indian Nation and a private landowner is already showing promise for Lake Quinault sockeye.

Roger Blain, a Lake Quinault resident and retired Olympic National Park ranger, wanted to find a way to help wild salmon. A pond on his property seemed appropriate for an overwintering nursery for young fish if it could be connected to the lake, so he contacted the Quinault Nation.

The Quinault Fisheries Department thought sockeye might use the pond if introduced. Quinault sockeye, or blueback, are renowned for their unique taste and are culturally and economically important to Quinault people.

With a \$20,000 restoration grant from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, a channel was created between Blain's pond and Lake Quinault via Ziegler Creek three years ago. The bottom of the groundwater-fed creek was lined with small, clean gravel preferred by spawning salmon. The creek's channel was narrowed to maintain a consistent flow between the pond and stream. Coho began to use the habitat immediately and over the last

three years, the channel matured to proper conditions for sockeye plantings last year.

"We planted 10 pairs of adult sockeye in the pond this fall," said Bill Armstrong, fisheries biologist for the Quinault Indian Nation. "We monitored the temperature and dissolved oxygen in the pond and stream channel. All the conditions were right for spawning, but we had to wait and see if we got fry leaving the pond this spring," he said.

Fisheries technician Anthony Taiber designed a fish trap with a fine mesh to temporarily trap any outgoing fry from the pond so they could be counted. The results have delighted the biologists.

"So far, we've had more than 1,000 fry leave the pond and we should have more before it's all over with," said Armstrong. The biologists have been particularly interested to see that the fry have elected to stay in the pond for a period of time to feed before leaving. That allows them to grow to a size that



This pond, home to a partnership between the Quinault Indian Nation and a private landowner, is helping to improve sockeye production in Lake Quinault. *Photo: D. Preston*

improves their survival chances.

Whether the project is a complete success won't be known for another four years when adult fish would return to the pond to spawn.

In the meantime, landowner Blain loves having spawning fish in his backyard and the opportunity to show how partnerships can work to help fish.

"There's a lot of fear out there that saving fish means people taking over your land. I'm hoping people can see this project and see what a good thing it can be," Blain said. — *D. Preston*

Carving Friends

Wade Greene, Makah tribal member and carver, teaches Seattle area school children about the tools he uses as part of Salmon Homecoming at the Seattle waterfront in early September. The annual event includes a forum and talking circles that bring diverse communities together to learn about and share ideas for salmon recovery, as well as a pow wow, concerts, 5K salmon run/walk, traditional canoe ceremony, and an environmental fair. *Photo: D. Preston*



Clam Die Off Hurts Tribal Harvesters



Tom Strong, Skokomish tribal shellfish technician, surveys clam populations on tidelands at the mouth of the Duckabush River near Brinnon. *Photo: E. O'Connell*

Sometime this past winter hundreds of thousands of clams on three popular beaches in north Hood Canal inexplicably died. The die off occurred on three cornerstone beaches for area treaty tribes, compelling them to decrease harvest by up to 40 percent.

“We’re going to slow down our harvesting, because these beaches are very important to us,” said David Herrera, Skokomish Tribal Fisheries Manager. Tribal and state managers haven’t determined the exact cause of the death on the three beaches: Quilcene, Dosewallips and Duckabush. But what likely happened was an extremely low tide last winter that exposed the clams to frigid air. Dead clams are

noticeable because they become unable to hold themselves closed.

“It’s reassuring that pollution or diseases didn’t cause the die off,” said Randy Hatch, shellfish biologist with the Point No Point Treaty Council. The treaty council is a natural resource management organization formed in 1974 to serve the Skokomish, Port Gamble S’Klallam, Jamestown S’Klallam and Lower Elwha Klallam tribes.

“Things like this are going to happen; there is nothing we could have done to stop it. But the die off’s effect on tribal economies can’t be underestimated,” said Hatch. Because of the nature of treaty harvests, large die offs like this affect tribal members more than recreational harvesters. While it is still possible, though a bit harder, for a recreational harvester to get a limit of 40 clams in a day, tribal harvesters will have to work much harder to make a living. Tribal harvests only occur around days of extreme low tides. The amount of money a harvester makes in that one day is based on how many clams one can harvest. “If there are fewer clams, people aren’t going to make as much money harvesting,” said Herrera.

“We will curtail our harvesting opportunities to preserve the remaining clams,” said Herrera. “Even though we’re sacrificing a lot, we need these beaches to have harvestable amounts of clams available in the future. The only way to do that is to lower our harvests now.”

As salmon populations have declined, various shellfish harvesting opportunities for species such as crab, geoduck and intertidal clam and oysters have become increasingly important to tribal harvesters in the past decade.

“The tribes, as co-managers with the state, believe in providing the greatest security possible to shellfish,” said Herrera. “The tribes are the original fisheries managers in western Washington; we have always worked for sustainable harvests.” – *E. O'Connell*

Tribes Change Harvest To Benefit Summer Chum

Hood Canal treaty tribes worked hard to prevent impacts to weak wild salmon populations during this year’s coho fishery.

Because the run timing of Quilcene River hatchery coho is earlier than other Hood Canal coho runs, they overlap with the wild summer chum that are also entering the river. Hood Canal summer chum were listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act in 1999.

To lessen impacts on summer chum, the tribes in 1992 severely restricted the decades long practice of setting gill nets on the western shore of Quilcene Bay. Instead, they pull beach seines, which, although more labor intensive, allow tribal harvesters to safely release summer chum. “It’s very important to the tribes for Hood Canal summer chum

to recover,” said Randy Harder, executive director of the Point No Point Treaty Council, a natural resource management organization formed in 1974 by the Skokomish, Port Gamble S’Klallam, Jamestown S’Klallam and Lower Elwha Klallam Tribes.

“The tribes have and will continue to do their part. But harvest is only a small piece of the puzzle compared to what we’ve seen in terms of habitat damage,” said Harder.

Almost every year after they changed their harvest practices, the tribes saw incidental summer chum catches drop off dramatically. “Since 1995, we have been exceeding escapement goals,” said Harder. “Escapement” is the number of fish allowed to spawn in order to sustain a run at a desired level. – *E. O'Connell*

Tribes Race To Save Threatened Murrelet

At precisely 4:37 a.m., the first rays of sun penetrate the gloaming on Wheeler Mountain, overlooking the north fork of the Stillaguamish River. A crew of tribal biologists is already in place, hoping to sight a threatened seabird.

For the next two hours, they will stare skyward in search of a robin-sized, football-shaped bird that can fly at speeds up to 90 miles per hour. With ears busy filtering out the hundreds of ambient forest sounds and eyes straining for dark birds entering a dark forest, biologists from the Stillaguamish Tribe and the Tulalip Tribes are painstakingly documenting every encounter with the unique and rare marbled murrelet.

These surveys, which concluded Aug. 2, are not only crucial to understanding the murrelet, but could have a significant impact on forest practices and salmon recovery in Washington. Washington's murrelet populations are listed as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species Act and listed as threatened under state law in California, Oregon and Washington.

"Once we can prove that these birds occupy a given forest, that forest can be protected," said Jen Sevigny, a biologist with the Stillaguamish Tribe. Along with husband Mike Sevigny, a biologist with the Tulalip Tribes, Sevigny has tracked various bird species in six states.

The tribal co-managers are working with the state's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to protect the threatened creature. DNR scientists came up with a computer model to determine what habitat is most likely to contain murrelet nests. The DNR model, though, is based on a small sample size (four sites out of more than 50), and has turned



Jen Sevigny, a biologist with the Stillaguamish Tribe, watches for marbled murrelets during an early morning survey for the threatened birds. *Photo: J. Shaw*

up some results that puzzle biologists. For example, the model calls red cedar trees key to murrelet habitat — though the birds aren't known to select cedar at all.

DNR has asked tribes and state and federal agencies to investigate other areas that are believed more likely to contain murrelet nests. Since the Stillaguamish and Tulalip tribes share much usual and accustomed fishing, hunting and gathering territory, the partnership was ideal.

Because the bird relies on two distinct ecosystems for survival, the murrelet is a key indicator species. Any habitat disruption, whether on the coast or in the forest, can have catastrophic effects on the bird.

"The murrelet shows us how interconnected our natural resources are, and how important protecting habitat is to wildlife," said Jen Sevigny.

By design, the surveys coincide with the murrelet's summer breeding season. Female murrelets lay just one egg each year, coming inland to nest from April to September.

At most other times of year, the murrelet remains near the sea and its bounty of forage fish. During breeding season, though, the murrelet will fly from sea to forest, carrying surf smelt and sand lance up to 70 miles to feed its nestling. The doting parent might make multiple trips carrying a fish of four or five inches multiple times per day.

"No matter what models tell us, we have to do on-the-ground surveys to really know where murrelets exist," said Mike Sevigny. "This could save a lot of acreage that represents prime habitat for a magnificent and threatened species." — *J. Shaw*

Sovereignty Solidarity

The Sovereignty Run kicked off in Taholah on the Quinault Indian Nation on Sept. 11. Organizers hope to raise more than \$1 million for the Sovereignty Protection Initiative, a coordinated nationwide tribal strategy to address the increasing diminishment of tribal self-governance and jurisdiction as a result of recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings. The first mile of the run was led by the family of the late Joe DeLaCruz, a champion of the tribal sovereignty cause. The run was set to end Oct. 7 on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court. *Photo: D. Preston*



Sauk-Suiattle Tribe Seeks To Protect Salmon, Reservation

Faced with a migrating river channel that threatens their reservation, the Sauk-Suiattle Tribe is committed to finding a comprehensive solution that also protects area fish populations.

A channel of the Sauk River lurks a mere 500 yards behind houses on the tribe's reservation outside Darrington. This stretch of river was once the main channel for the Sauk, and its glacially-fed nature makes it predisposed to wander. If flooding occurs, the home of the Sauk-Suiattle is at risk.

"For several years now, we have been trying to protect our reservation," said Jason Joseph, Sauk-Suiattle tribal chair. "But our first priority is to protect the regional environment, including the fish to which our people are culturally tied."

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed a solution to the tribe – place hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of rocks in the slough behind the reservation if the channel floods. But many of those rocks would be swept into the river – creating problems for fish and other creatures in the ecosystem.

Seeking an answer that protects both the tribe and the environment, the Sauk-Suiattle came up with a win-win proposition: build two or three large engineered logjams, often used in salmon recovery projects, to hedge against flood waters and provide improved salmon habitat at the same time.

"Logjams would not only do the same job that the rock proposal would, they would protect salmon – and would do all of this at a lesser cost," said Doug McMurtrie, environmental director for the tribe.

The tribe is faced with essentially three alternatives: do nothing, the costs of which could run into the millions when the inevitable high waters come; plan for the rock placement, which could run into the hundreds of thousands; or install the logjams, which would cost \$80,000.

Besides the cost, rocks in the river could displace the finer gravel that makes for good fish habitat. Natural wood logjams would prevent this problem.

"Having an emergency flood event with those rocks in place would create a worst-case scenario for the tribe and for fish," McMurtrie said. "We need a solution that helps both the tribe and the environment."

Other agencies, such as the National Marine Fisheries Service, have tentatively expressed support for the tribe's logjam plan. The state Department of Ecology and Skagit County have each offered to help provide logs for the structures.

The Sauk River is designated "Wild and Scenic" by the National Park Service. To the tribe, the special beauty of the river and the cultural importance of the salmon dictate special attention to a long-term, cooperative solution.

"We have some of the best habitat for salmon in the Northwest right here," said Joseph. "Why not do the right thing for fish, right from the very beginning?"

– J. Shaw



The Sauk-Suiattle Tribe is trying to protect its reservation, as well as salmon habitat in the the Sauk River, from the effects of flooding. *Photo: J. Shaw*

Upper Skagit Tribe Works To Enhance Wildlife Resources

Declining wildlife herds are culturally and spiritually devastating to treaty Indian tribes in Washington. But the Upper Skagit Tribe is working to ensure that flagging mountain goat and elk populations come back strong.

The tribe received a \$19,500 grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to support its wildlife restoration programs in June. The bulk of the funds, administered under BIA's wildlife grant program, will enable the tribe to continue its annual herd population studies and, for the first time, augment the elk population by transferring out of area animals into the Nooksack elk herd. The rest of the money will assist the tribe's mountain goat study in the Mt. Baker area, scheduled to begin in August.

"Over the past several years, we have been working at formulating truly comprehensive elk and goat recovery plans. Now, we are beginning to put those plans into action," said Scott Schuyler, Upper Skagit Tribe natural resources policy coordinator.

The tribe has been a leader in recovering the Nooksack elk herd. When budget cuts over the past several years affected Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's ability to continue aerial surveys of the Nooksack herd, the Upper Skagit Tribe stepped in during 1997 and secured thousands of dollars in grants to ensure that those studies continued.

"Before we know how to replenish these herds, we need to know more about the goats and elk that live in our wilderness areas," said Schuyler. "These studies represent an important step toward achieving that goal."

– J. Shaw

Twin Rotors Aid Twin River Project

A habitat restoration project along the East Twin River was made much easier with the help of a Chinook: the helicopter not the salmon.

Constructing logjams to improve fish habitat is nothing new to the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe, but using a helicopter to help bring a river back to life was a different approach. Because the restoration site on Sadie Creek, a major tributary of the East Twin River, is not easily accessible, the tribe opted to use the helicopter instead of building roads.

“This approach is much better because we are not tearing up the area near the river and creating erosion by building roads,” said Jim Bolstrom, restoration field manager for the tribe. “Plus, the work will be done much quicker.” The project marked the first time the tribe has used a helicopter to improve fish habitat.

The logs will replace trees that used to naturally fall into the river and create a healthy environment for fish. The



A Chinook helicopter transports one of 32 large conifers to the site of a habitat restoration project on the East Twin River. *Photo: D. Friedel*

engineered logjams are needed on the East Twin River because heavy logging throughout the last century eliminated streamside vegetation and ruined fish habitat. A catastrophic fire also torched the area in the 1930’s.

“By putting these trees back into the river, we are creating natural habitat for the fish,” said Bolstrom, as the twin-rotor helicopter snatched a 17,000-pound log and lifted it with ease. “We are not doing any harm to the area, instead we are helping. By placing these logs on the river, we are creating good salmon habitat, which is no longer there.”

Eventually, the logs will create curves in the stream that has straightened over the years. Pools also will form, benefiting the river system’s coho and chum salmon populations, as well as steelhead and cutthroat trout.

“We have pretty good evidence of improved fish habitat; fish are using the repaired habitat on other rivers as cover and to find food,” said Mike McHenry, habitat biologist with the tribe. “Salmon simply love these logjams.”

About five acres of trees were purchased from Rayonier to construct the logjams. Those logs were hauled to a gravel pit near the East Twin River. From there, the helicopter transported the logs to the restoration site. A private landowner, the State Department of Natural Resources and the Merrill and Ring timber company all own land along the river.

Oregon-based Columbia Helicopters was hired to transport the logs. The Chinook helicopter, which was originally used to move soldiers and military equipment, can lift about 27,000 pounds. That capability helped quickly move the logs into place along the river.

“What would have probably taken us a month will now be done in about six or seven hours,” said Bolstrom.

– E. O’Connell & D. Friedel

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

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

PRSRT STD
US POSTAGE
PAID
MAIL NW

Serving the Treaty Indian Tribes in Western Washington

