

NWIFC News



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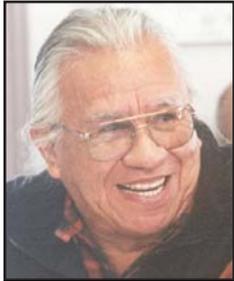


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A Dead Fish Is A Dead Fish

By
Billy Frank Jr.
Chairman



How do you measure leadership in natural resource management? When it comes to saving the salmon resource, leadership must be measured in terms of heart, concern for our descendants and the ability to demonstrate courage and integrity in the face of great odds.

I have spoken for the salmon for more than 50 years, and I will tell you this: If salmon go extinct, it will be due to lost and damaged habitat.

Northwest fisheries have been cut dramatically over the past 30 years – 80 to 90 percent in some areas, and 100 percent in others. Still, some salmon populations continue to decline. Harvest cannot be cut back fast enough to make up for natural production lost to degraded and destroyed habitat. Even if fishing stopped today, forever, some salmon runs would go extinct—because they do not have enough good quality spawning and rearing habitat.

Here’s a simple fact from an old fisheries manager: Putting more fish into degraded habitat does not result in greater fish survival. Any habitat can only support a certain number of fish. Rivers are like aquariums in that way. When water is polluted, uplands degraded, waters heated and wetlands wiped out, rivers can sustain just so many salmon.

Here’s another simple fact you should know. We have the best fisheries management processes in the world. Unfortunately, the facts don’t matter to those who want to continue to destroy habitat.

A dead fish is a dead fish. It simply does not matter if that fish is caught to provide nutrition and sustain culture or if it’s destroyed in a turbine or in polluted waters.

Yet, the debate being waged over salmon in the Northwest is clearly one of allocation. Who is going to get a bigger slice of the salmon pie? Those who take salmon by degrading habitat want to do more of the same – at the expense of harvest. Regrettably, some harvesters also want more at the expense of other harvesters. To non-Indian society, the whole thing is like a political football game played by people who think their values and needs are more important than others.

To the Indian, it’s a more serious matter. We’re not in the fisheries management business so we can milk every last dime out of our Mother Earth for the next fiscal quarter. We want salmon to survive so we can feed the bodies and spirits of our children for generations to come. People need to stop fighting over the last fish, however they want to kill it, and focus on a positive vision for the future.

Frankly, harvest of salmon needs to be part of that vision because it’s a good outcome of good management. To the tribes, it’s a living legacy. It’s also the supreme law of the land—a fundamental right reserved by our ancestors in Constitutionally-sustained treaties.

When you think of salmon survival in the Northwest, you must think of habitat, or your eyes are closed to the truth. When you think of leadership and political courage, you must think of those who are willing to admit it.

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On The Cover: The assembled skeleton of a gray whale harvested by the Makah Tribe in 1999 is hoisted into place in the Makah Cultural and Research Center in Neah Bay. *Photo: D. Preston*

Mischa Has A Nose For Enforcement

In the field of natural resources enforcement, Mischa is a rarity.

Rolling around in the grass with a ball in his mouth, Mischa acts like any other loveable and playful dog. But once Mischa's harness is strapped on, the German shepherd turns serious.

"When I put this harness on him, he knows it's time to go to work," said Sgt. Tim Reiber of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe's Natural Resources Enforcement Department. "And Mischa loves his work."

In western Washington, several tribal enforcement departments use dogs to help find drugs. But Port Gamble is the only enforcement department that uses a dog for tracking and game detection, said Reiber. As a member of the tribe's enforcement team, Mischa's job is to help patrol, track and sniff out contraband, such as illegally obtained salmon, shellfish and game. The 4-year-old long haired German shepherd has been on the force since January, when he and Reiber were certified for patrol work and tracking.

Reiber is Mischa's partner and owner. Reiber purchased Mischa – whose official name is Oyster von Temar – as an 8-week-old puppy, and has been training the dog for law enforcement work ever since. Mischa has undergone about 1,500 hours of training, which includes obedience, suspect apprehension and tracking. The duo, with the help of Cpl. Doug Lux and Officer Lonny Bierman, work on all three aspects of training any chance they get.

"We started with obedience training," Reiber said. "Obedience is the most important part of the training. I have to be able to control the dog and call him off safely before he can be trusted with any bite work."

'He's a great addition to our team.'

*– Sgt. Tim Reiber
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe
Natural Resources
Enforcement Department*

Mischa is the third German shepherd Reiber has owned and the second he has trained for law enforcement. For 16 years, Reiber has been a part of the tribe's natural resources enforcement department, and has been in law enforcement since joining the U.S. Army's Military Police in 1980. Since Mischa was certified, Reiber and the dog have been called upon at least once a week for their expertise. In one case, Mischa helped track a lost 4-year-old girl at Teal Lake near Port Townsend. Cpl. Lux eventually found the girl, unharmed, just ahead of Reiber and Mischa.



Sgt. Tim Reiber, Port Gamble S'Klallam tribal natural resource enforcement officer, restrains Mischa during a training exercise that includes officer Lonnie Bierman.

Photo: D. Friedel

So far, tracking has been Mischa's biggest job. Unlike most North American law enforcement dogs, Mischa was trained to track for speed. The majority of law enforcement dogs in the United States are trained in a method called "foot step track," which is a slow, yet precise, form of tracking. Mischa, however, was trained to "track through drive," which allows the dog to use speed while staying near the scent of the person being followed. That method is better suited for tracking people that are constantly on the move, said Reiber. Mischa can follow nearly three-hour-old tracks, and can go for about two miles at a quick pace.

"If he shoots past the turn, he starts to circle the area to pick up the trail again," Reiber said. "It's a much quicker method of tracking, and that can make a big difference when it comes to finding someone on the run."

This summer, Mischa and Reiber took part in their first K-9 trials competition in Beaverton, Ore. Mischa competed against several other law enforcement dogs in several events, including area search, agility course, fastest dog, suspect apprehension and handler protection. Mischa performed well and received awards in area search and handler protection.

Reiber expects Mischa to be an integral part of the tribe's natural resources enforcement team, while being helpful outside of the tribal community as well.

"Mischa was brought onto the force specifically for natural resources enforcement," Reiber said. "But that doesn't mean he can't help the tribe and other local agencies with different aspects of law enforcement. He's a great addition to our team."

– D. Friedel

Tulalip Tribes Applaud New Orca Protection

It is known by many names – killer whale, orca, Grampus – but to the Tulalip Tribes, the powerful marine mammal will always be known as the blackfish. Since the U.S. federal government listed local orca populations as “threatened” under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) this fall, future generations will have a better chance to enjoy healthy populations of this special animal, by whatever name.

No one is more enthusiastic about these new protections than the Tulalips, who have a special cultural relationship with the animal that is their tribal symbol.

“This is a major victory for all tribes,” said Tulalip Chairman Stan Jones Sr. “Perhaps now, we can count on seeing killer whales, the blackfish, for years to come.”

The ESA affords orcas living in Puget Sound the toughest protection available. This group, known as the Southern Resident killer whales, contains 89 orcas organized into three pods, or family groups.

“Recent information and further analysis leads our agency to conclude that the Southern Resident killer whale population is at risk of extinction, and should be listed as endangered,” said Bob Lohn, northwest regional director of the National Marine Fisheries Service. “By giving it protection under the ESA, we have a better chance of keeping this population alive for future generations.”

The Tulalips have consistently advocated protections for the magnificent animal. When the listing was first being considered in 2002, then-tribal chairman Herman Williams, Jr. offered his support for the whale in a letter to Lohn. The orca is “an essential part of our tribe’s cultural and spiritual being,” wrote Williams.

Pollution and habitat destruction have hurt the whales both directly and indirectly over the years. Not only has prime orca habitat been degraded, but dwindling salmon runs have undermined a staple in the animal’s diet.

“The fate of the orca shows us how every species, all life, is interconnected,” said Terry Williams, natural resource commissioner for the Tulalip Tribes. “When we save and restore salmon habitat, we protect the salmon’s home, but we also improve conditions for all other species relying on that ecosystem – including humans.”



An orca leaps from the water in Dyes Inlet near Bremerton.

Photo: D. Preston

In the wake of the listing, federal agencies must establish a recovery plan for the Puget Sound orcas. Which activities this plan may affect are not yet known, but they could include major construction projects with potential to impact the sound, shipping, whale watching and fishing. Tribal fishermen have already endured painful sacrifices, limiting harvest by up to 90 percent in some cases.

“We all rely on the earth for survival,” said Terry Williams. “Tribes have worked hard and made great sacrifices to protect the environment that sustains us. We’ll continue this work, for the sake of the orca, the salmon and our human communities.” – *J. Shaw*

Orca Fast Facts

- The orca is the largest oceanic dolphin. Besides humans, it is the most widely distributed mammal on Earth. The orca is found in every ocean in the world and most seas, including the Mediterranean and Arabian seas.
- The orca is the only species in the genus *Orcinus*. Though it is one of 35 species in the dolphin family, it has no immediate relatives. Paleontologists believe that the orca is one of the oldest members of the dolphin family.
- Western science did not identify the orca as a species until 1758, but indigenous cultures have known about the animal for far longer. The Nazca culture in what is now Peru carved a giant orca image into the desert floor between 200 B.C. and A.D. 600. In addition to the Tulalips, other indigenous tribes in the Pacific Northwest feature the orca in their culture, artwork and stories.
- Each orca pod has its own songs or patterns of clicks and whistles; resident pods have their own regional dialects.

In Skagit River Basin

Landmark Salmon Project Completed

In the past, all species of wild salmon thrived in the salt marshes where Skagit County's Fornsby Creek met Swinomish slough. Today, a significant amount of that habitat is totally devoid of salmon.

In the future, those fish are going to have a chance to come back because of a recently completed multi-year project by the Swinomish Tribe and the Skagit River System Cooperative (SRSC).

This latest salmon recovery effort by Swinomish and SRSC, the natural resources consortium of the Swinomish and Sauk-Suiattle tribes, is a local landmark in restoration that will open up hundreds of acres of habitat for all salmon species. Moreover, it's a positive step toward future cooperative conservation work in the Skagit basin.

"We're very proud of this work for three reasons," said Lorraine Loomis, fisheries manager with the Swinomish Tribe. "First, it will turn habitat that was inaccessible to any salmon species into habitat that is accessible to all species; second, it proves that tribes and farmers can work together successfully; and finally, it shows that the tribes' salmon recovery agenda applies to our own land, too. We'll do whatever we have to do to save these fish."

'We always try to pursue win-win solutions.'

– Lorraine Loomis
Fisheries Manager
Swinomish Tribe

Swinomish planners collaborated with local farmer Gail Thulen on a comprehensive habitat restoration plan for 300 acres of Swinomish tribal land which Thulen leases to grow wheat, peas and potatoes. Also known as the Smokehouse floodplain, the site on the tribe's reservation near La Conner extends north up to the Highway 20 Bridge.

Research by SRSC has proven that marsh habitat is in short supply in the Skagit basin, having been devastated by development and dike-building over the past 150 years. Historically, the area's wild fish relied on these marshlands to prepare for their transition from fresh to salt water; studies have shown that such habitat is critical to Skagit salmon production.

Before work began, the Smokehouse site had failing, fish-blocking tide gates that were intended to keep salt water from intruding onto the farmland. But the antiquated gates weren't just leaking – they were undermining habitat and preventing salmon access to Fornsby Creek and the rest of the Smokehouse floodplain.

Steve Hinton, director of restoration with SRSC, says that the work will enhance habitat for fish while at the same time protecting farmland.

"Replacing the failing tide gates with a model that allows fish passage gives us an opportunity to demonstrate that estuarine habitat can be opened for fish while at the same time accommodating agricultural land use," he said.

In addition to replacing the tide gates, the tribal team completed essential habitat improvements throughout the site. SRSC work opened up fish access to five miles of the Swinomish channel ecosystem.

Over the next few months, tribal crews will also plant native vegetation along the site's streams, which helps reduce erosion and provide cool water necessary for fish health.

Perhaps the most important impact of the work, tribal leaders say, is the cooperation it could herald.

"We always try to pursue win-win solutions," said Loomis. "This project is an example of how we can find common ground, and that we can bring back our wild salmon runs without seriously impacting agriculture."

The tribes have taken great care to minimize any risk to Thulen's crops. After dredging sediment from the sloughs to im-



Steve Hinton, director of restoration with the Skagit River System Cooperative, puts the finishing touches on replacement of a tide gate. *Photo: J. Shaw*

prove habitat connectivity, tribal crews used that material to protect the adjacent agricultural land from salt water intrusion.

Plus, the innovative tide gate system allows for adjustments during floods to protect farmland against rising salt water levels. Finally, for each acre of land impacted by the project, either by decreased productivity or exclusion from tilling, the tribe will financially compensate Thulen.

"Of all people, tribes know what it's like to watch your livelihood, your primary food source, disappearing," said Loomis. "Habitat loss has crippled our wild salmon populations for the last century and a half. That's why the last thing we want to do is cause unnecessary problems for farmers, and why we're taking every possible precaution to make sure we have both healthy farms and fish runs." – J. Shaw

Tribes Take To The Sky To Improve Salmon Habitat

Two Olympic Peninsula tribes teamed up recently to make the most of limited salmon habitat restoration funding. The Lower Elwha Klallam and Makah tribes hired a twin-rotor Chinook helicopter to drop nearly 300 hundred logs into three local streams to improve salmon spawning and rearing habitat.

As part of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe's project, about 130 logs weighing 1.2 million pounds were scattered throughout the confluence of the South Fork of the Pysht River and Salmonberry Creek. The Makah Tribe dropped 160 logs into the Sooes River. Most logs still had their root-wads.

"The idea is to put back the wood that these rivers have lost, creating healthy habitat for fish," said Mike McHenry, fisheries habitat manager for the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe. "Because these sites are pretty inaccessible, the best way to go about adding much-needed wood is placing the pieces from the air."

A century of logging and poor land management led to the loss of streamside vegetation and stripped the river of fallen trees. Putting timber back into the river systems will provide shelter for juvenile fish and slow the streams, creating pools and riffles essential for salmon habitat.

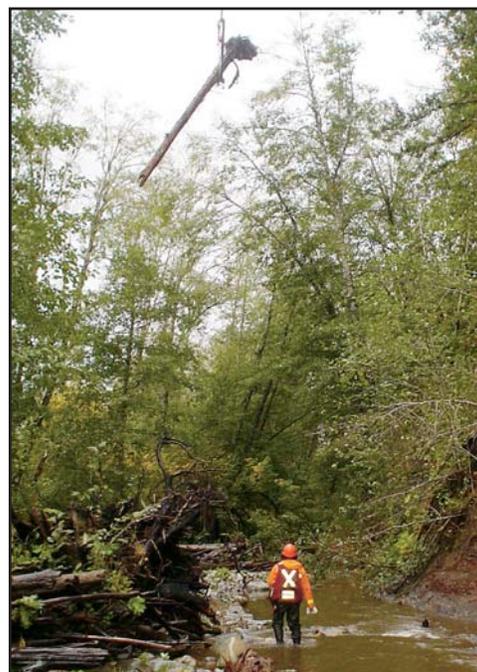
Merrill & Ring, a forestry and land management company, donated all the wood, valued in excess of \$50,000, used in the Pysht and Salmonberry project. "Merrill & Ring is the primary land-owner in the drainage and they have been a great partner in these projects," said McHenry. "Their level of commitment to salmon recovery is unparalleled on the Olympic Peninsula."

The Pysht and Salmonberry support coho salmon, as well as steelhead and cutthroat trout. The project was part of a \$650,000 Salmon Recovery Funding Board grant for the tribe's large-scale restoration on the South Fork that will continue through 2007. The tribe has been working to improve salmon habitat in the watershed for more than a decade.

In the case of the Makah Tribe, seven hours of helicopter time helped create 18 logjams on a 1.5-mile stretch of the Sooes River. The jams will help reconnect the river with its floodplain and improve habitat by creating pools and eddies that allow salmon to survive and thrive.

"Moving that amount of wood with machines on the ground would have damaged the stream channel and added egg-smothering sediment at a time when fall chinook are preparing to return," said Jeff Shellberg, hydrologist for the Makah Tribe. "The helicopter allows us to do a lot of work in a small amount of time with the least amount of impact on the river channel."

The Sooes River empties into the Pacific Ocean on the Makah Tribe's reservation, but much of it winds through thousands of acres of non-tribal commercial timberlands in its 10-mile plus course. Historically, much of the river channel off-reservation was bulldozed and cleaned of wood because it was thought to block salmon migration and destabilize the channel, contrary to scientific knowledge today. This practice was carried out for years on most of the Olympic Peninsula rivers.



A helicopter technician guides placement of logs into the South Fork of the Pysht River. *Photo: D. Friedel*

"These jams are a start – a way to begin the healing process for the river," said Shellberg. "We added to existing, small jams which should attract more wood to create large stable jams necessary to provide important salmon habitat." Chinook, coho, steelhead, cutthroat and chum are all found in the river.

The \$160,000 project was paid for by two federal grants, a Bureau of Indian Affairs Jobs In The Woods grant and Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund grant.— *D. Preston & D. Friedel*



Jeff Shellberg, hydrologist for the Makah Tribe, surveys one of 18 logjams created on the Sooes River using a helicopter to move the wood. *Photo: D. Preston*

Spawning Site Map Aids Chinook Recovery

The most valuable information about chinook salmon – but sometimes hardest knowledge to come by – is where these troubled fish actually spawn. That makes the Puyallup Tribe of Indians' chinook spawning surveys all the more valuable because the Puyallup River's main channel is clouded with glacial silt, making chinook and other species hard to see.

The tribe makes weekly float trips down the Puyallup mainstem, counting migrating chinook and their egg nests (also known as redds). In addition to counting salmon, the tribe also maps the redd locations with Global Position System technology. "The satellite data gives us an almost exact location, within a few feet, of where chinook lay their eggs," said Russ Ladley, resource protection manager for the tribe. Puyallup River chinook are part of a larger Puget Sound stock listed as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species Act.

With that kind of precise data, the tribe can track changes in spawning behavior and habitat. "This is important information because each year we observe natural and man made changes in habitat availability and suitability," said Ladley. "If we know exactly where valuable spawning habitat is, we can use this data to make sure it's protected and reference those changes over time.

Chinook spawn in different places every year, but the more we understand about where they're spawning, the more effectively we can protect them," said Ladley.



Eric Marks, a biologist with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, maps the location of chinook salmon nests in the Puyallup River watershed. *Photo: E. O'Connell*

Tribal biologists have found that main stem-spawning chinook usually reproduce in areas where groundwater percolates up through the riverbed. "The conventional wisdom was that chinook avoided spawning in the mainstem because silt would choke their eggs," said Ladley. The groundwater provides the eggs with enough clean water to survive. "They seem to home in on these places, where there is cool, clean groundwater and good gravel."

To protect those sections of the Puyallup where groundwater comes up through the riverbed, the tribe needs to look beyond the river and its banks. "Most of that clean groundwater could be originating well beyond the immediate river channel," said Ladley. "We need to look beyond the banks of the river to protect chinook."

"By mapping locations of chinook spawning we gain another tool to be used in habitat management and stock protection," said Ladley. "Protecting and restoring salmon habitat is the most important thing we can do to restore chinook runs in the Puyallup River."

The tribe catalogues their mapping data in their "Annual Salmon, Steelhead and Char Report" – the most comprehensive report on salmon populations in the Puyallup system. The tribe collects the population data on all species of salmon during its survey season, which begins in mid-August, continues through the winter, and ends in mid-June. The report is available online at: www.nwifc.org/recovery/downloads.asp. – *E. O'Connell*

Flying Fish

Coho salmon on the Salmon River near the Quinault Indian Nation's hatchery bolt for the spawning grounds following some much-needed rain late this fall. *Photo: D. Preston*



Historic Whale Skeleton Installed In Makah Cultural And Research Center

For Makah whaling crew member Andy Noel, the hanging of the skeleton of the gray whale harvested in 1999 in the Makah Cultural and Research Center is a beginning, not an end.

“It’s great to have our bones here. But we need more bones to add to them,” said Noel during the installation Nov. 28. “We need our whale bone graveyard going again,” he said, alluding to the continued legal obstruction of the tribe’s treaty-reserved right to harvest whales since the single successful harvest in 1999.

The hanging of the 600-pound, nearly 30-foot long whale skeleton in the museum is the culmination of several years of effort by Neah Bay High School students and staff to preserve the symbol of the tribe’s resurrected whaling culture.

“Whaling means a lot to Makah people,” said Janine Bowechop, executive director of the Makah Cultural and Research Center. “The skeleton is a tangible representation of the success of our resumption of whaling. When I look at it, I think about all the effort that the whalers and the community put into reviving whaling and what the students did to make this a reality.”

‘It’s just a perfect fit.’

– Janine Bowechop
Executive Director
Makah Cultural And
Resource Center

Neah Bay High School students and their teacher, Bill Monette, took on the necessary and stinky chore of cleaning the bones and cataloguing them in preparation for their assembly.



Carrying one of the flippers of the gray whale, Casey Cody of Skulls Unlimited International prepares to attach it to the whale skeleton. Photo: D. Preston

“To see it now in the museum is awesome,” said Jeanie Thompson, 20, a Neah Bay High School graduate who worked on cleaning and cataloguing the bones for two years. “Cleaning it was a different experience, but I liked learning it. I helped supervise the project by keeping track of who was doing what jobs along with cleaning and cataloguing,” said Thompson, who is now working at the museum.

More than 1,000 hours of student work went into preparing the bones for final assembly. “It’s a pretty nice feeling seeing it hang there,” said Monette, who is taking a leave of absence from teaching. “I’m still in touch with a lot of the kids and I think they are going to be pretty impressed. It’s one of the nicest mounts I’ve seen of a whale skeleton.”

Skulls Unlimited International of Oklahoma City assembled the bones after Nathan Pamplin, marine mammal biologist for the tribe, saw their work at a conference. “They were a very professional

outfit and they’ve just done an incredible job with this skeleton,” said Pamplin.

Skulls Unlimited specializes in assembling and mounting skeletons of all kinds for museum exhibits, universities and private collections as well as selling a variety of bones and skulls.

Principal assembler Clark Griffith of Skulls Unlimited put more than 170 hours into the whale project. “I did a lot of research into whale skeletons and I read some background about the tribe and their whaling history,” said Griffith. “I feel really privileged to put this whale together.” At the tribe’s request, Griffith preserved the history of the hunt in the skeleton, including harpoon strikes.

“It’s living proof that we’re whalers – not only then, but now,” said Ben Johnson, Makah tribal chairman.

“Everything about this seems so right,” said Bowechop. “The whale was harpooned near the village of Ozette where most of the artifacts in the museum were excavated. It’s just a perfect fit.”

– D. Preston

Makah Tribe Aids Indigenous Russians With Whale Research

A Makah tribal biologist is helping indigenous Russians find out why a few gray whales off their coast are so foul-smelling that even village dogs won't eat the meat.

"It's a problem that is only being experienced in the Russian region of Chukotka," said Nathan Pamplin, marine mammal biologist for the Makah Tribe. "It has not been experienced anywhere else throughout range of the gray whale, which extends along the coastline from eastern Russian to northern Mexico."

Pamplin traveled to Russia in August and spent two weeks gathering information from native hunters in the remote village of Lorino on the Bering Strait. "They reported that the whales had a medicine-like smell, like walking into a pharmacy," said Pamplin. "They also said there were no stories passed down from their ancestors about this phenomenon, so it would seem to be unique to this place and time."

Native hunters try to avoid the foul-smelling gray whales, which can be identified at sea by the stench of their exhaled breath when they surface.

Scientists want to know how many whales may be affected by the phenomenon. It is possible that a contaminated food source or a disease is causing the smell. Gray whale numbers are healthy overall. The species has rebounded to the extent it was removed from the Endangered Species Act list in 1994.

"Both the conservation sub-committee and the aboriginal subsistence whaling sub-committee of the International Whaling Commission wanted the stinky whale problem investigated following this year's meeting in South Korea," said Pamplin. "My job, in coordination with other scientists and the Russian govern-



A group of Chukchi fishermen pauses during a day of work in Lorino, a small village on the Russian side of the Bering Sea. Photo: Nathan Pamplin, Makah Tribe

ment, was to gather information from the native hunters who are providing tissue samples for analysis. Because of the remote location, getting the tissue samples to a lab in a timely manner is one of the biggest challenges."

The Makah Tribe and the indigenous people of Chukotka, Russia have a unique relationship. The Chukotka and the Makah share a quota of gray whales that enabled the tribe to harvest a single gray whale in 1999.

The gray whale is central to both cultures. For the Chukotka people, gray whales are an important source of food in a region where hunger and poverty are common. The Makah Tribe has a whaling culture dating back thousands of years, as evidenced in the many whaling implements found in the ancient Makah village of Ozette.

Gray whales feed in the northern Bering and Chukchi seas during the summer. The whales winter in Mexican and southern California waters where mature females bear a calf every other year.

"We're happy to provide the assistance of our marine mammal biologist to this project," said Micah McCarty, Makah tribal council member. "It is a part of responsible management of a species that is important to both of our cultures." – D. Preston

Resolution: No MMPA Waiver Needed For Makah To Whale

The U.S House of Representatives Resources Committee passed a resolution in October declaring that the Makah Tribe should not be required to obtain a waiver and a permit under the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA) to exercise their treaty-reserved right to harvest gray whales.

The non-binding resolution, which passed by a bipartisan vote of 21 to 6, states: "The Congress disapproves of requiring the Makah Tribe to obtain a waiver and a permit under the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 before taking gray whales, and expresses its intent that the government of the United States should uphold the treaty rights of the Makah Tribe."

"It was a positive affirmation for the long-held views of tribal leaders working for the integrity of Indian treaties," said Micah

McCarty, a Makah tribal councilman who observed the vote in Washington, D.C. "It's very helpful that the resolution acknowledges that the process of filing for the MMPA waiver is burdensome, costly, and contrary to the letter and spirit of the tribe's treaty rights."

"This is a frustrating process for our people and we are truly appreciative of the efforts of Rep. Norm Dicks (D-Wash), the chairman and the members of the Resources Committee and their staff," said Ben Johnson, Jr., Makah tribal chairman. "We hope that this action by Congress will help us resume our traditional whaling in the very near future and help other Indian tribes around the country."

The Makah Tribe's request for a waiver under the MMPA to resume their treaty-reserved right to whale was the subject

of four public scoping sessions held in Washington state and Washington, D.C. in October.

Last year, a federal appeals court acknowledged the tribe's treaty right to whale. However, the court ruled that the tribe must comply with the MMPA and obtain a waiver from the National Marine Fisheries Service before it can proceed with a hunt. The ruling comes despite explicit language in MMPA that says the law isn't intended to abrogate any Indian treaty.

The Makah propose to hunt up to 20 gray whales during a five-year period, with a maximum of five whales landed in any one year and subject to any quotas from the International Whaling Commission.

– D. Preston

Pink Returns Way Up On Nisqually River

Good Spawning Habitat Contributes To Large Run

The Nisqually Tribe’s salmon surveyors are seeing more pink salmon in one day than they used to see in the entire year. “During one stretch we counted more than 200 pink salmon,” said Craig Smith, tribal harvest management biologist. “There were so many pinks, we weren’t able to count them all. There haven’t been this many pinks seen in 20 years.”

“While we don’t know all the factors that led to the big run this year, we do know that one reason had to be good spawning habitat,” said Jeanette Dorner, salmon recovery manager for the tribe. Pink salmon typically return to the Nisqually in such small numbers that little is known about the run.

Unlike other salmon species, pink salmon only spawn every other year. “Their offspring spend very little time in freshwater and move out to the ocean very quickly,” said Dorner. “Then they spend two years in saltwater and come back to spawn.”

The sudden resurgence of pink salmon in the Nisqually follows the boom-and-bust life cycle of pinks in other watersheds. The Puyallup River pink run nearly topped 300,000 two years ago after nearly a decade of runs peaking at 20,000 fish. “While Nisqually River pinks have much further to go until they reach the kinds of numbers we’ve seen in other places, its very heartening to see more come back this year,” said Dorner.

The tribe and its partners in the watershed are working on a recovery plan for all species of salmon, including pink. The



The largest run of pink salmon in 20 years returned to the Nisqually River this year. Pink salmon are often referred to as “humpies.”

Photo: E. O’Connell

Nisqually Multi-Species Plan will help focus restoration efforts on habitat important to all species of salmon that return to the Nisqually watershed.

“Each species of salmon has different habitat needs,” said Dorner. “We need to protect and restore habitat across a wide cross-section of the watershed to make sure salmon come back in strong numbers.” – E. O’Connell

Planting A Heritage

Jennifer Squally, left, and Jolene Michaels plant bear grass as part of a native plant restoration project on the Nisqually Reservation. In addition to bear grass, the tribe is also working to re-establish camas on the five-acre plot. Bear grass is used for basket weaving. Camas has been a staple in tribal diets for centuries. *Photo: E. O’Connell*



Puyallup Tribe Upgrades Water Quality Standards

The Puyallup Tribe of Indians is upgrading the water quality standards within its nearly 20,000-acre reservation, including the lower three miles of the Puyallup River. “Every community in the Puyallup River watershed benefits from clean water,” said Bill Sullivan, natural resources director for the tribe. “Clean water is not only important for wildlife and salmon, but for everyone.”

The tribe depends on clean water in the same way that any other community does, as a source of drinking water. The tribe also depends on clean water to support its traditional way of life.

The new standards will be a substantial improvement over the tribe’s original 10-year-old rules. “Water quality standards are the most basic tool we use to protect water,” said Sullivan. “By making sure these rules are up to date and based on the best science, we can take care of the water.”

The Puyallup Reservation is one of the most urban reservations in the country. “The water on the Puyallup Reservation faces just about everything you can throw

at it, short of a nuclear reactor,” said Sullivan. “These standards will help us ensure that, at the very least, our water quality doesn’t get any worse.” Built into the standards is an enforceable anti-degradation policy, a way for the tribe to ensure that future actions on the Puyallup River don’t do any additional harm.

The tribal water quality standards also are unique because they designate all the surface waters within the reservation as waters of “exceptional cultural significance.” While these waters are provided one of the highest levels of protection, they allow flexibility to allow discharges that are associated with restoration or beneficial activities.

An amendment to the federal Clean Water Act in 1987 encouraged tribes to write water quality standards. Under the same law, tribal water quality standards and those written by states have the same authority.

The tribe, along with the state of Washington, co-manages natural resources in the Puyallup River watershed. “The Puyallup Tribe has a long track record of



The Puyallup Tribe’s new water quality standards protect the health of tribal members, who still depend on salmon as a food source. *Photo: E. O’Connell* responsible natural resources management,” said Sullivan. “These improved standards are simply a continuation of that tradition.” – *E. O’Connell*



Generations

These homes were built at the mouth of the Hoh River and inhabited by Hoh tribal members for many years. This picture was taken in the 1940s. Today there are no tribal homes in this area. Most have been moved up the road closer to the tribal center. *Photo: Courtesy of the Alvin Penn family.*

Stillaguamish Tribe Keeps Eagle Eye Out

With several homes nearby and a healthy dose of traffic, a tree grove along Frank Waters Road near Stanwood is not the place one would expect to find prime habitat for an endangered species. The occasional 747 roaring overhead contributes to the semi-urban effect.

Just as dusk settles, though, something even more majestic than a 747 in flight swoops through the trees, almost noiseless, casting a shadow on the moon. It's one of several dozen bald eagles that will return here this evening, resting overnight in the branches.

These eagles are being watched – for their own good – by researchers from the Stillaguamish Tribe as the birds return home from a long day of feeding. This December, tribal crews began surveying the areas eagles use along the North Fork of the Stillaguamish River.

Since starting its eagle survey program in 2003, the Stillaguamish Tribe has been studying the endangered national symbol. This year, tribal researchers are watching two prominent roosting sites, studying how many eagles are using the perches and for what purposes.

“Documenting where the roosts are is very important. It helps us learn more about what eagle populations need to thrive, and it helps us support policies that protect eagle habitat,” said tribal biologist Jen Sevigny.

The Frank Waters Road roost is a prime example. With pressure to log the surrounding area, being able to prove with sound science that eagles were roosting in significant numbers here was essential to preserving bird habitat.

“This place looks fairly suburban,” said Stillaguamish natural resources technician Robbie Hutton. “But if you just watch for a while, you see how many eagles rely on this site for survival.”

“We want to be sure that our forest practice policies are adequate to protect the eagle,” Sevigny said. “The surveys should help us get an idea of what the regional wintering populations are doing once they migrate here from British Columbia and Alaska.”

The bald eagle is listed as “threatened” under the federal Endangered Species Act, but scientists say what it needs to recover is no great secret. Like most wild creatures, eagles re-



As night falls, Stillaguamish tribal natural resource technician Robbie Hutton watches for eagles to begin roosting. *Photo: J. Shaw*

quire an expanse of quality habitat, an abundant food source, and a safe place to breed and raise young.

Before those places can be safeguarded, though, they must first be identified. Stillaguamish crews are seeking out critical areas in their local watershed. Regionally, other tribes and non-tribal organizations are joining in the effort.

The survey work is being done in cooperation with the Tulalip and Sauk-Suiattle tribes, as well as the National Park Service and The Nature Conservancy. – *J. Shaw*



Bald eagles are listed as “threatened” under the Endangered Species Act. – *J. Shaw*

– *J. Shaw*

Tribe’s Land Purchase Protects Critical Habitat

The longest journey begins with a single step, and the Stillaguamish Tribe took a major step this fall on the way to safeguarding an essential ecosystem.

The tribe acquired 137 acres of land along Squire Creek, one of the most important tributaries of the Stillaguamish River. This is the first in what the tribe hopes will be a series of land purchases designed to protect areas vital for fish and other wild creatures.

“Squire Creek contains some of the most important habitat for salmon and wildlife in our watershed,” said Shawn Yanity, Stillaguamish tribal chairman. “We have to be sure that the creek and the places surrounding it are protected.”

Squire Creek is a key contributor to the Stillaguamish River’s North Fork, draining a watershed of 25 square miles. It offers habitat for chinook, pink, chum and coho salmon as well as steelhead.

The area around the creek is also of cultural significance to the Stillaguamish. Besides preventing destruction of habitat, the tribe aims to preserve the acreage for traditional uses, such as gathering traditional plants.

While significant in and of itself, the purchase of this parcel is just the beginning. Ultimately, the tribe would like to acquire about 2,000 acres of land in the watershed.

“We’d like to do something similar to what the Nisqually Land Trust has done,” said Yanity, “acquiring land in order to be sure it is preserved for the next generation.” – *J. Shaw*

Nooksack Project Preserves Farmland, Enhances Habitat

Since so many of Washington's fish-producing rivers are bordered by farmland, work to restore salmon runs often goes hand-in-hand with work to preserve agriculture.

The Nooksack Tribe's natural resources department recognizes this, looking for salmon recovery projects that can help fish and farmers at the same time. A new project on one of the Nooksack River's most important tributaries is just such a project.

Nooksack Natural Resources (NNR) has earned a Pioneers in Conservation grant as part of the Shared Strategy for Puget Sound regional salmon recovery effort. The \$71,000 award will support the tribe's habitat restoration work in the Bertrand Creek area, work which promises to enhance fish habitat while also protecting farmland from floods.

"Salmon recovery doesn't stand much of a chance if we can't work together," said Bob Kelly, director of Nooksack Natural Resources. "This project is an unprecedented example of cooperation between tribes, farmers and flood control agencies,

tribal officials say, is the collaborative nature of Nooksack's work.

The Pioneers grant program is new this year, aiming to "provide financial support specifically for salmon recovery projects that promote conservation and restoration on farms." Officials in both tribal and non-tribal government say that cooperation between the agricultural community and salmon recovery advocates is essential.

"Whatcom County farmers and salmon are both struggling as growth competes for resource lands. Pioneering projects like these by the Nooksack Tribe and the [Whatcom] Conservation District are great examples of how we can save them both," said Whatcom County Executive Pete Kremen in a statement.

The Pioneers grant and the Nooksack Tribe will provide some funding, but the project will also involve substantial cooperation and funding from Whatcom County Public Works, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bertrand Creek Watershed Improvement District, Whatcom County Conservation District, Whatcom County



Bertrand Creek, one of the most important tributaries to the Nooksack River, will be a focus of restoration work by the Nooksack Tribe and its partners.

Photo: J. Shaw

Currently, agricultural fields around lower Bertrand Creek suffer from floods in both the winter and spring months. Unfortunately, the levees are placed in an alignment that is ineffective at flood prevention.

"The levees have been replaced several times over the past few decades," said Kelly, "but always in the same alignment. Farmers need a solution that will work over the long haul, and setting back the levees is the way to do it."

Besides moving the levees, salmon recovery crews will plant native vegetation in riparian (streamside) zones that are crucially important for fish and wildlife. This will further stabilize the levees, reducing erosion and long-term expense to the public.

The environmental benefits of the work will be substantial. At least five species of salmon and trout rely on Bertrand Creek, which scientists say is probably the Nooksack River's most productive lower main stem tributary.

This work will also improve fish habitat in Bertrand Creek, a key tributary of the Nooksack River, and benefit threatened species such as chinook salmon and bull trout. Both are listed as "threatened" under the federal Endangered Species Act.

"The vast majority of spawning and rearing habitat for the Nooksack River spring chinook is in the upper forks," said Kelly. "But there are very few sites where fish can escape the swift current and the predators they find in the main stem. Once we improve this habitat, the confluence of the main stem and Bertrand Creek will be one of these badly-needed sites." – J. Shaw

'This project is an unprecedented example of cooperation between tribes, farmers and flood control agencies . . .'

– Bob Kelly
Director
Nooksack Natural
Resources Department

all working toward shared goals."

NNR will use the funding to purchase conservation easements, allowing salmon recovery workers to access property necessary to complete the project. With the easements secured, partners working with the tribe can widen the creek's floodplain, restoring natural channel migration patterns, as part of a larger effort to improve salmon and bull trout habitat.

Ecologically, the project's value will be significant. Of even greater importance,

Diking District No. 4 and a few independent farmers.

After the easements are secured, the tribe's partners – including predominantly the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Whatcom County – will move back and lower the levees currently constraining Bertrand Creek's flow. While lowering the levees might seem at first to increase the risk of farmland flooding, quite the opposite is true.

Quileute Tribe Contributes To Understanding Of Lake Pleasant Sockeye

An icy December wind rips across Lake Pleasant near Forks as Quileute fisheries technicians Rueben Flores and Jeremy Payne launch a small boat to conduct the tribe's annual sockeye salmon spawning survey.

Motoring slowly around the mile-long lake's shoreline, Flores and Payne pause to count the scarlet-blushed spawning sockeye at each spawning location.

"The tribe has conducted the surveys each winter for the past eight years when the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife reduced its survey effort in Clallam County. The tribe contributes its survey results to state and tribal databases used in planning Indian and non-Indian fish harvest seasons. "A few tribal fishermen target sockeye commercially and the state provides a non-Indian sport fishery for these fish on the Sol Duc River before they head to the lake to spawn," said

Roger Lien, fisheries biologist for the Quileute Tribe.

Unlike coho, steelhead and chinook salmon, adult sockeye cluster near the shores of the lake, with males fighting over females and all fighting in the nearshore shallows for spawning space. Tribal technicians count the fish November through January.

"We compare relative abundance of fish at the peak of the run. We have a lot of years of observation, so it's a pretty good reference," said Lien.

Size-wise, Lake Pleasant sockeye are thought to be among the smallest in Washington, according to National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), generally weighing less than three pounds. The average size for most sockeye in Washington ranges between five and seven pounds. The state record for a sockeye is more than 10 pounds.



Jeremy Payne, Quileute fisheries technician, records the location of spawning sockeye on a map of Lake Pleasant. Photo: D. Preston

While there has always been a natural run of sockeye in Lake Pleasant, the State of Washington introduced non-native sockeye to the lake in the late 1920s and 30s, according to NMFS.

"The population is healthy," said Lien. "Tracking their numbers not only helps plan harvest, it helps us track the health of the waters they inhabit." – D. Preston



Sockeye salmon fighting over mates and spawning territory mill about the shoreline of Lake Pleasant. Photo: D. Preston

Junk Cars Hauled From Bogachiel River

Two junk cars creating potential hazards for fish and their habitat were pulled from the Bogachiel River near Forks in mid-December. The Quileute Tribe paid the \$1,000 cost of the removal.

Bogachiel River valley resident Chiggers Stokes alerted the tribe to the location of the cars. State and county agencies assisted with moving the process forward quickly. “One vehicle probably still had some fluids in it, so it’s definitely good to get that out of there,” said Frank Geyer, Timber/Fish/Wildlife biologist for the Quileute Tribe. “Neither one of them was doing anything good for fish habitat, so it’s great that the tribe stepped up and paid for removal.”

“The one vehicle had been in there a couple of years following an accident,” said Geyer. “The other was an abandoned vehicle that had been near the river for quite a few years and some kids apparently decided it looked better in the river than alongside the road.”

D&H Enterprises of Forks extracted the cars as well as a refrigerator located nearby. One car had to be cut up into pieces to remove the accumulated silt prior to cabling them out.

The Bogachiel River empties into the Quillayute River and contains coho, chinook, and steelhead as well as trout. The Quileute Tribe, as co-manager of the salmon resource, contributes to annual fisheries planning by conducting salmon spawning surveys as well as walking streams to determine fish habitat and presence as part of making sure state forestry rules protect



Steve Kilmer of D&H Enterprises in Forks hauls a junk car from the Bogachiel River, some 30 miles from the Quileute Tribe’s reservation. *Photo: D.Preston*

fish habitat. Numerous salmon habitat restoration projects have also been completed by the tribe in the basin.

“We care about the river,” said Mel Moon, natural resources director for the Quileute Tribe. “All parts of the effort to protect salmon are important.”

“The unusually low water levels recently gave us a short window to accomplish this,” said Geyer. “Being able to coordinate this quickly speaks to the spirit of cooperation that exists between agencies out here.” – *D. Preston*

Fishy Field Trip

Heather Schumack, hatchery technician for the Quileute Tribe shows salmon eggs to Quileute Head Start students as part of a field trip. The eggs are being reared at the tribe’s Lonesome Creek Hatchery. *Photo: D. Preston*



In Joint Effort By Tribes, Conservation Group

Fish-Blocking Culvert Pulled From Stream

To help restore an ecosystem along the Sauk Prairie, the Skagit River System Cooperative partnered with a prominent conservation group to enhance fish and wildlife habitat in the area this fall.

The Skagit River System Cooperative (SRSC), the natural resources consortium of the Swinomish and Sauk-Suiattle tribes, completed a culvert removal project on a parcel of land that had been purchased by The Nature Conservancy.

“We’re happy to be working with The Nature Conservancy,” said Devin Smith, senior restoration ecologist with SRSC. “When we work together on projects like this, we take meaningful steps toward salmon recovery.”

The area encompasses two important sloughs, the Sauk Prairie and Dan Creek sloughs. After The Nature Conservancy closed the sale this summer, SRSC began the work.

“Removing fish-blocking culverts is one of the most effective ways to restore important habitat for fish,” said Smith. “This project restored access to very productive habitat for salmon.”

A number of habitat problems were on display at the site, but old, improperly functioning culverts were foremost among them. SRSC removed four culverts, of which one was a particular



A crew from the Skagit River System Cooperative removes a failing culvert from a site along the Sauk Prairie near Darrington.

Photo: Kirsten Morse

this problem, tearing out the alien species and planting about 1,000 native trees. Besides the vegetation planting, SRSC also removed garbage from the site to prevent the refuse from migrating into the Sauk River. – *J. Shaw*

problem for coho salmon in the area.

“One of the culverts was really the grand prize,” said Smith. “It was undersized for winter flow conditions and created serious fish passage problems.”

Coho are the dominant salmon species in the area, but removing the culverts should benefit chinook as well. Dan Creek slough is a very productive spawning and rearing area for chinook, and this work should improve access to that slough.

Unlike many culvert removal projects, this work did not entail replacing the failing culverts with newer, superior models. Since part of the work plan was to close access to two spur roads off the main road – which will benefit wildlife species living in the area – new culverts were unnecessary.

Vehicles will now only have access to the area in the summer, when salmon are not present.

The site was also beset with invasive plants such as scotch broom. Tribal crews dedicated three days to solving

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