Elk population studies underway
Fight continues against invasive crab
New forest protections in place
Salmon return to restored habitat
Youth get hands-on at new hatchery
Water protections on right track

by Ed Johnstone
NWIFC Chairman

Tribes have traveled a long road and back again to improve water quality standards and protect the health of everyone who eats salmon and shellfish in the state of Washington.

In November, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finally reinstated the rule for human health criteria that tribes spent more than 25 years fighting for—better protections based on what we know about seafood consumption rates in our tribal communities and how toxic chemicals in our food affect all of us.

For more than two decades, tribes engaged in lengthy and often contentious processes with state and federal agencies. What was at stake was the seafood central to the economic and cultural well-being of our region.

The resulting human health protections were a compromise because Indigenous communities, along with Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, consume much more locally harvested salmon and shellfish than the rest of the general population. By failing to keep known carcinogens out of the water, the federal government stood by while our first foods were being poisoned.

Make no mistake. As beautiful as our region is, our waters are contaminated. Fifty years ago, when the Clean Water Act became law, rivers were on fire and you could see the pollution flowing into our water.

Today, the threats are harder to see. In addition to industrial discharge, our water is polluted by wastewater treatment facilities and toxic chemicals in stormwater runoff from our roads, including the chemical 6PPD-Q from tire debris that we know kills coho salmon and steelhead.

Six years ago, the EPA finalized the most protective water quality standards in the country, regulating some of the toxic chemicals allowed to enter our water. But in April 2020, EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler rolled them back because of pressure from industrial lobbyists.

We fiercely objected to that move and several treaty tribes, the state, and the environmental law organization Earthjustice took legal action, forcing a hard look at the arbitrary nature of the rollback.

Those were tough years, but finally last fall, EPA Administrator Michael Regan reinstated the rule to protect the health of everyone who eats fish and shellfish caught in the state.

This is cause for celebration, but it’s just one step in our journey. Next, we must improve the aquatic life criteria, the standard that determines how much of a chemical can be present in surface water before it is likely to harm plant and animal life.

The federal aquatic life criteria currently in place were based on the known science at the time they were adopted way back in 1986. Since then, scientists have learned more about aquatic toxicology and ecological risk assessment, and these advancements must be used to protect the ecosystems that support our treaty rights, including the fish and shellfish we eat. If it’s healthy for the fish, it’s healthy for us.

We don’t have time to fight for another 25 years over aquatic life criteria. Let’s build upon the strong partnership the tribes have now with the EPA and the state. We’re going to need committed leadership and clarity of action to make it happen. We’re headed in the right direction, but we still have work to do.
High schoolers operate fish hatchery

It’s hard to say who is benefiting more from the new fish hatchery program at Neah Bay High School. Hundreds of coho salmon eggs are being nurtured through the early stages of their lives by dedicated students in hopes the fish have a chance of survival in the ocean.

At the same time, students are learning from these tiny orange organisms, and using their individual strengths and skills to care for the eggs.

That’s exactly what science teacher Holly Keedy and Principal Lucy Dafoe want to see—both salmon and students thrive.

Neah Bay High School students are in their first year of operating their own fish hatchery, constructed recently with some creative infrastructure. It was built out of a small, vanilla-colored shipping container converted by ReddZone, a company that manufactures mobile hatcheries.

Eggs were donated by the Makah Tribe’s Hoko Falls Hatchery from coho spawned in January. The water supply is runoff from the school’s shop building, flowing into a 3,000-gallon tank through a UV filter and then piped into the hatchery.

While the primary goal is for students to learn about the salmon life cycle, the hands-on learning experience has additional benefits.

“This project has helped students gain confidence in themselves and understand how much of a difference their actions make,” Keedy said. “Students have been asking to take on responsibilities and are excited to participate in the activities. Their enthusiasm has transferred beyond the hatchery project and into the classroom.”

Keedy divided her high school biology class students into three teams that are taking full responsibility for these coho salmon eggs, guided by professionals including the tribe’s Hoko Falls Hatchery manager, Joe Hinton, and staff from the nearby Makah National Fish Hatchery.

The student facilities crew makes sure water temperatures are correct and the water is flowing and clean. The media team documents each step of the eggs’ lives through photos and videos to be shared, rallying support for the program from other Neah Bay students and staff. The tour team gives well-informed tours about the program to anyone who will listen. Each student chose the team they wanted, to play into their individual strengths.

Keedy and Dafoe want the hatchery program to be integrated across all parts of the school curriculum, with students understanding how salmon and treaty rights are intertwined (social studies), writing essays about the salmon life cycle (English), collecting data from the hatchery to make sure it’s operating correctly (science) and documenting the process to share with others (media).

The value of an onsite lab is that the students can take ownership of their work while gaining experience in a classroom setting, then apply those skills in the real world as opportunities arise, Dafoe said.

“I’m really excited because we never get to do these things,” said Mariella Wakole, a Neah Bay junior. “This is really fun because a lot more students are involved and actually wanting to learn a lot more because a lot of them get really rowdy. And now a lot of them are turning a new leaf and coming up here and doing something. They can actually see it, learn it, hear it and everything. It’s awesome.”

In addition to teaching students how salmon are important to the Makah Tribe and Neah Bay community, Keedy is hoping the work will inspire students to pursue careers based on skills they are exploring in the hatchery.

For Wakole, the program already has changed her mind about her future.

“I’m thinking of going into marine biology,” she said. “I wanted to go into carpentry, but this seems a lot more interesting.” —Tiffany Royal
When representatives of nine tribes and bands of Indians signed the Treaty of Medicine Creek in 1854, a grove of Douglas firs stood sentry nearby.

The rights to fish, hunt and gather reserved in that treaty are still practiced and protected by the tribes generations later—and now a seedling from one of those trees is growing on the Nisqually reservation, standing watch once again.

Nisqually Tribal Council Vice-Chair Antonette Squally led an effort to acquire seedlings descended from the original “treaty tree,” the last surviving tree from the site near the Nisqually River delta. While a windstorm in the 1970s felled the original tree—which had died of disease earlier—several of its seeds were planted and others preserved.

Squally led a ceremony earlier this year to plant one seedling on the reservation and give seedlings to other tribes party to the treaty: Muckleshoot, Puyallup and Squaxin Island.

Squally said she was struck by the mission to make sure a link to the tribe’s past would again take root in reservation land.

The Washington State Historical Society, the Nisqually Tribal Council and historical experts from the tribe helped with the effort, Squally said, which eventually culminated with seedlings donated by Bob Barnes of Holly Tree Farms.

Members of the Nisqually Indian Tribe and representatives of other tribes party to the treaty gathered in chilly January weather for the planting.

The weather reminded Squally of the conditions hereditary chiefs, sub-chiefs and ancestors faced to provide for future generations.

“I figured if our ancestors could endure that freezing cold, so could we,” she said to the crowd.

“They are the reason we have survived—the foresight of their actions. They did this for the future generations of their people,” Squally said. “I stood strong on this day, but my heart was very heavy thinking of what they were subjected to.”

Squaxin Island Tribal Chairman Kris Peters said his ancestors would have been pleased to see the tree again take root.

“Plants have an energy. Trees have a life. We knew we were never above our environment,” he said. “We worked together.”

The crowd that witnessed the planting gathered for a meal after.

“This is monumental—something that’s embedded in each and every one of us,” said Puyallup Tribe of Indians Council member Fred Dillon. “To see something that represents the treaty tribes like this, in my lifetime, is incredible. This is something beautiful.” —Trevor Pyle
Indian Creek gets boost of salmon habitat

The Elwha River’s biggest salmon-producing tributary has become even more of a juggernaut after the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe used a new stream restoration technique.

A quarter-mile section of Indian Creek, deep in a valley below Highway 101 and west of the Elwha River, always had been a migratory channel for salmon.

But during 10 years of spawning surveys of the creek, the tribe’s habitat program manager Mike McHenry realized he’d never seen signs of salmon spawning in this section.

Pulling back further, he noticed a 700-foot-long dike next to the channel—about 10 feet tall and 20 feet wide—likely constructed decades ago to protect Highway 101 from being eroded.

“Part of the reason I didn’t see this initially is because there were 40- to 50-year-old trees on this dike,” he said. “It wasn’t real obvious until I got out of the channel and started poking around and even getting on the other side of the dike, where there was an isolated wetland.”

The dike was pushing water into the creek, creating a fire hose effect and resulting in a scoured creek bed with degraded salmon habitat.

“All the energy from the water is exerted on the bed, then the bed degrades and the sediment gets coarser, which is why there wasn’t any spawning in here,” he said.

To address this, the tribe implemented a new technique called stage zero restoration. The idea is to reset the environment to how it was before it was altered by human development.

The tribe removed the dike, then rebuilt the creek bed layer by layer, alternating between soil and wood pieces such as logs. They also added structure to the floodplain with logs, rootwads and native trees, adding to the salmon habitat.

The tribe worked until chinook salmon arrived in September to spawn on the site, then pulled out to let nature do its thing. Save for restoring an additional small section downstream, Indian Creek is now in good shape for salmon, McHenry said.

—Tiffany Royal

Above: Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe revegetation manager Allyce Miller, left, and habitat program manager Mike McHenry discuss the planting effort along the creek.

Left: Miller and two volunteers plant native vegetation along the newly restored section of Indian Creek. Tiffany Royal (2)
Tribe protects, restores local forests

The Nooksack Indian Tribe signed a historic agreement with the U.S. Forest Service in February that will protect treaty resources.

From mountains to river valleys, healthy forests are needed to preserve resources integral to Nooksack culture, from salmon to cedar.

Under the new agreement, the tribe will co-manage lands within the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest. The agreement was long sought by the tribe’s natural and cultural resources staff.

“I put my hands up to our natural resources department,” said Nooksack Chairwoman RoseMary LaClair. “They work every day to protect our treaty resources and honor the wishes of our ancestors.”

Establishing the agreement was a continuation of the work of earlier generations, said George Swanaset Jr., the tribe’s cultural resources director. “Our ancestors are with us all the time. We are just continuing the fight,” he said. “There are a lot of things in those mountains that haven’t been touched by anyone but our people, so when there is logging or other plans, we get concerned.”

Nooksack ancestors relied on areas that today are within the national forest to harvest berries, elk and other resources. “Since time immemorial, the Nooksack people have hunted, fished, and harvested plants and other resources found on lands now managed by the U.S. Forest Service to meet their subsistence, spiritual, cultural, and medicinal needs, and for the purposes of trade and commerce,” the new agreement states.

For decades, access to those resources has been limited and the resources themselves diminished. Nooksack Councilwoman Victoria Joe said she didn’t realize how lucky she was to have salmon and venison as a child because her family hunted and fished.

“I remember growing up thinking we were poor because we didn’t buy groceries,” she said. “Today I’m truly a poor Indian because I don’t have fish in my freezer.”

The new agreement will help protect resources including salmon, improve the tribe’s involvement in land management, and remove obstacles for tribal access to treaty resources within the national forest.

“Thank you for working with us to protect our way of life,” tribal member Clayton Roberts said to Forest Service staff when the agreement was signed.

“What we use out in nature is not only for sustenance...It’s what makes us, us.”

Investing in the future

On the same day the Forest Service agreement was signed, Nooksack families, in a separate partnership with the Whatcom Land Trust and nonprofit Indigenous Beginnings, planted a future forest along the South Fork Nooksack River.

Tribal youth learned about the value of riverside forests for salmon and placed dozens of Douglas fir and cottonwood seedlings in the ground.

Over time, the trees will grow larger than the children who planted them, providing benefits for salmon including shade, stormwater filtration and, eventually, new logjam habitat for the fish.

This type of riverside vegetation is critical in the South Fork where high water temperatures have killed salmon in recent years.

Treaty protection advocate Jeremiah Johnny said it felt good to contribute to the planting.

“It’s amazing what we got done,” he said. —Kimberly Cauvel
Estuary restoration adds up for salmon

Where the Snohomish River meets the saltwater of north Puget Sound, the recently completed Blue Heron Slough project restored 353 acres of salmon habitat.

The project is a piece of the puzzle to bring the fish back to the watershed in higher numbers, and to sustain them through a changing climate. It also was the push that brought estuary restoration by acreage above the 10-year goal—of 1,237 acres—set in the 2005 Snohomish River basin Salmon Conservation Plan.

For years, the Tulalip Tribes have focused on restoring habitat in the estuary, particularly because of the value of that habitat in supporting threatened chinook salmon.

“We’re creating a much better environment for the fish to use and feed before going to Puget Sound and eventually the ocean,” said tribal member and environmental liaison Daryl Williams. “The bigger the fish are when they head out to sea, the better their chances of survival.”

The Blue Heron Slough site is adjacent to the tribes’ Qwuloolt estuary restoration project, the Snohomish County’s Smith Island restoration project and other protected areas in the estuary.

“It helps connect a variety of other projects that have recently been completed and creates continuity in the Snohomish River estuary,” said Brett Shattuck, the tribes’ restoration, acquisition and stewardship senior scientist.

The tribes, in partnership with National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries and others, help monitor this growing network of restored estuary. The results so far are promising.

“We are seeing pretty immediate use of chinook in these habitats and we are hoping to see increases in abundance over time,” Shattuck said, adding that DNA testing has shown fish from other watersheds, including the Skagit and Stillaguamish rivers, are also using the habitat. “We’re not done yet, but what has been done, it’s working for fish.”

The effort has been a long game, with the 400-acre Qwuloolt project, for example, taking about 20 years and $20 million to complete.

“Since the levee breached in the Qwuloolt estuary, we’ve seen a dramatic shift in the species assemblages and habitat quality that is much more beneficial for native fish,” Shattuck said. “Before restoration, the whole site was basically covered in nonnative, invasive reed canary grass. All of that reed canary grass died and was replaced by a variety of native plants.”

The tribes hope to see that habitat continue to evolve, eventually into mature waterfront forest like at Heron Point, another site the tribe recently purchased to preserve.

“This is ideal habitat. There’s more water, more bugs, more places for fish to hide,” said Todd Zackey, marine and nearshore program manager for the tribes.

While the Blue Heron Slough project marked a milestone toward salmon recovery in the Snohomish River watershed, restoration is just getting started.

“We’ve done a lot of good work in the estuary, but it’s just the beginning,” Williams said. “If we’re going to recover salmon, we have to do all of it.” —Kimberly Cauvel
Fight against green crab in ‘brushfire mode’

In the ongoing battle to curb the spread of invasive European green crab in the marine waters of Washington state, Lummi Nation is keeping up the fight year-round—and seeing signs that the effort is beginning to pay off.

While others helping to manage the crab invasion—including the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Washington Sea Grant Crab Team and other tribes—concentrate trapping during spring and summer and retreat during the cold season when the crabs are typically less active, Lummi aquatic invasive species staff won’t break from their defenses in Lummi Sea Pond and neighboring shorelines along the tribe’s reservation land.

“We’re still catching them,” said tribal member and fisheries biologist Nick Jefferson. “We’re really in brushfire mode.”

Lummi Sea Pond is one of the hotspots in the state where, once the species was detected, the number of European green crab captured in traps grew exponentially. The 750-acre pond, encircled by dikes with tide gates to control the flow of water, was built to support the tribe’s aquaculture of salmon and shellfish. That sheltered habitat has proven ideal for the rapid growth of green crab.

“It’s a unique habitat and for whatever reason, it’s a paradise for green crab, so we have to maintain pressure,” said Shawn Evenson, the tribe’s aquatic invasive species coordinator. “Most places stop trapping in winter but we have to keep going.”

While European green crab activity slows down during the cold season, it remains rare at Lummi Sea Pond that a trap emerges from the water without one of the invaders inside. When seasonal field technicians Tatiana Elizondo and Johanna Michelin pulled traps from frigid waters near the tribe’s fish hatchery in early December, they gathered several of the menacing species, including a female with
Tribe studies captured European green crab

Left: Makah Tribe marine ecology technician Annie Cavanaugh collects data from European green crab caught on the Makah Reservation in 2022.

Right: The Makah Tribe and volunteers caught more than 25,000 green crab last year and recorded data from each one including carapace width, sex, underside coloration, missing or regrown limbs and barnacle growth on the shell. The tribe will start trapping again in April. Tiffany Royal (2)

a mass of eggs clinging to her underside.

“That was a pregnant female that would have spread her young if we weren’t out there,” Evenson said. “One female can crank out 100,000 to 200,000 offspring, so if you have a few females undetected, they can undo everything that you’ve done.”

That’s why the team has ramped up trapping efforts since the first evidence of European green crab was discovered in the sea pond in 2019. The tribe partnered with WDFW, volunteers and tribal members to conduct trapping. The tribe also built a boat launch to support trapping in deep areas and established trapping sites outside the pond to ensure no spread of the species goes undetected. At times, up to 900 traps are deployed at a time, baited with sardines or herring.

That effort seems to be making a difference, with the population explosion appearing to taper off.

After exponential growth from about 60 European green crab caught in late 2019 to about 2,600 in 2020, then about 86,000 in 2021—about 78,000 were caught during 2022. That signifies a break in the growth of the Lummi Sea Pond population.

The age range also indicates the population is no longer on the upswing. While in 2021 the majority of the 86,000 green crab pulled from the pond were “young of the year”—a sign of reproduction—no new generation was detected in 2022.

“We took so many gravid females out of the water, we took so many mating pairs out of the water, we took so many crabs that they weren’t able to reproduce,” Jefferson said. “It’s really, really promising.”

The team will continue trapping year-round in order to keep the species in check and in hopes that the apparent plateau may begin to curve downward.

“We’re going to maintain pressure,” Evenson said. “Their population can grow exponentially when unchecked, so if we let off the pressure, that’s what will happen.”

During 2022, nearly 98% of green crab captured in the Salish Sea and nearly 30% captured statewide came from Lummi Sea Pond. —Kimberly Cauvel

Michelin, left, and Adams examine freshly caught European green crab in December 2022. Kimberly Cauvel
The Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe has been working to sustainably expand its economy while preserving and restoring natural resources.

There has been tremendous growth in its economic ventures, including the gas station, deli, golf course and health clinic, while the tribe continues to restore habitat, including Jimmycomelately Creek and shellfish beds in Sequim Bay.

“We have this beautiful blend of Western and Indigenous perspectives because when you have this balance between the two, you can actually serve your people and your lands and your creation so much better,” said Loni Greninger, Tribal Council member and director of the tribe’s social and community services department. “We settled in this land. We believed that the Creator gave this to us to steward and take care of it, and in return, (it) would take care of us.”

Learn more in “Restoration Nation,” a film about how the tribe works to preserve the environment while growing its economy.

Watch: nwtt.co/restorationnation

Top: Loni Greninger, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe director of social and community services, enjoys spending time among cedar trees. “I imagine my ancestors...doing the exact same thing,” she said. North Forty Productions

Above: The restored mouth of Jimmycomelately Creek empties into Sequim Bay. Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe
Suquamish Tribe biologists have been bushwhacking throughout east Kitsap County looking for problematic culverts on salmon-bearing streams.

Since September 2022, biologists Hanna Brush, Theo Suver and Steve Todd have visited private, county and city properties to evaluate fish passage through culverts and other stream-crossing structures that have not been catalogued before, or where information needs to be updated.

Fish passage barriers are considered a critical stressor for salmon and steelhead that return to their native streams to spawn, said Todd, the tribe’s salmon recovery biologist.

“Fish passage is viewed as one of the limiting factors to healthy fish populations,” he said. “Coho especially are a big deal in Kitsap County because the Kitsap watersheds are basically made for coho, with the amount of wetlands, beaver activity, and multiple seasons and environments that coho live through before heading out to salt water.”

Steelhead are a federally listed species in Kitsap watersheds and use a variety of habitats year-round that can be blocked by culverts. Chum salmon are another important species to the tribe; they are challenged by some culverts because they are considered poor jumpers.

The tribe looks at the condition of the culvert and determines whether it is passable for fish using methods established by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

The criteria they look for include sloped pipes, significant drops from the culvert opening to the stream, the ratio of the channel width to the culvert width, and whether a portion of the culvert bottom is filled with fish-friendly sediment.

The width of the pipe is important because if it is too narrow, it can create a fire hose effect during high flows, scouring streambeds and making it difficult for fish to swim through, Todd said.

The tribe is focusing on streams within east Kitsap’s larger watersheds, including Blackjack, Chico, Curley, Clear and Dogfish. The tribe also is using a database that documents stream locations, lengths and whether they are fish-bearing or not.

The tribe is coordinating this work with other entities, including WDFW, local governments and private landowners who have granted access to identify where fish barrier assessments are most needed.

About 150 culverts are expected to be assessed through mid-2023. The tribe will then start compiling a list that prioritizes repair based in part on the amount and quality of habitat that would be accessible to fish if a barrier is addressed. This database could also help obtain funding for salmon habitat restoration projects, Todd said. —Tiffany Royal
A predation problem?

Study to assess impact of seals eating salmon

As salmon runs returning to area rivers have dwindled, seals and other pinnipeds that may prey on them have gained the interest of salmon recovery managers.

To determine whether problematic predation exists locally, the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians is studying harbor seal diet and behavior in the Stillaguamish River and Port Susan Bay.

"Before developing a management strategy, we want to figure out what the actual impact is; Whether seals that haul out in Port Susan Bay and are resident to the area are targeting salmon," said Jennifer Sevigny, the tribe’s wildlife program manager.

The tribe launched the study in 2022 in partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Naval Station Everett and Lummi Nation. The project received Tribal Wildlife Grant funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Project partners attach GPS tags to seals to track their movements.

“We want to understand their spatial distribution and haul-out behaviors,” Sevigny said.

The tribe has received past reports of seals in the Stillaguamish River. This study will shed light on when, how often and how far seals travel upriver, as well as whether the timing of those trips overlaps with salmon migrations.

Observations so far suggest there are about 100 resident seals in the area year-round. They are mostly females and juveniles. Additional seals are seasonally present, but it’s not yet clear what proportion of Stillaguamish salmon makes up their diet.

To find out, Sevigny and Stillaguamish wildlife biologist Amanda Summers trek each month into the mudflats of Port Susan Bay at low tide. They search for valuable evidence seals leave behind: their poop.

“Being out there on foot is amazing because we can see where the seals are actually hauling out and we can collect fresh scat samples for diet analysis,” Sevigny said.

In a lab, bones are filtered from the samples to show the types of fish the seals ate. Bones collected so far indicate a diet primarily of perch, sculpin, herring and flounder.

The tribe continues to look for clues about how much salmon the seals eat. After two years of scat collection, the team plans to analyze the samples for DNA markers of different prey species to gain additional information.

While seal populations have grown significantly since the Marine Mammal Protection Act became law in 1972, many salmon runs have seen the reverse trend.

In an effort to recover Stillaguamish River chinook, the tribe has invested in habitat restoration throughout the watershed. But for that work to pay off, the fish must be able to reach their spawning grounds each year.

“We’re doing everything possible to slow the rate of decline and reverse it toward recovery for our salmon stocks, but there’s still much to do to rebalance our ecosystem,” said Kadi Bizyayeva, Stillaguamish fisheries director. “Understanding pinniped and salmon interactions is a key part of this work.”

The Stillaguamish Tribe’s research could guide management of problem pinniped populations if needed to save Stillaguamish River fish.

—Kimberly Cauvel
Members of the Squaxin Island Tribe are proud to call themselves “People of the Water”—and now they’ll have a greater role in safeguarding it.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved Squaxin Island’s application in March to administer water quality standards and certification programs under the Clean Water Act, designating authority to the tribe to manage surface waters on the reservation and trust lands.

The agreement encompasses more than 2,500 acres.

Squaxin Island Tribal Chairman Kris Peters and members of the tribe’s natural resources department welcomed EPA Region 10 Administrator Casey Sixkiller to the Squaxin Island Museum, Library and Research Center to celebrate the new designation.

“We know for the future of the people, the land and the water, we need to have a seat at the table,” Peters said. “That’s why today is so important. Today, we have a seat at the table.”

Peters thanked natural resources staff who’ve partnered with the EPA on previous water health data collection efforts.

Sixkiller toured the tribe’s ongoing Shelton Harbor restoration project and praised the tribe’s dedication to water quality.

“As Native people, we know this as a truth: Water is life. And nothing is more critical to that life than having strong protectors,” he said.

The Clean Water Act authorizes the EPA to vest tribes with similar authority to state governments. Tribes must reach certain benchmarks to receive approval.

The Squaxin Island Tribe is the 18th tribe in EPA’s Region 10 to receive the designation, which it applied for in August 2022. Sixkiller said Squaxin Island’s dedication to protecting water for current and future generations will be a model as more tribes pursue and exercise greater authority.

“You will help us lead the way,” he said.

—Trevor Pyle
A proposed ban on nontreaty gillnets in the Columbia River would have led to backlash against tribal fisheries, tribal leaders told legislators during a committee hearing in February.

The ban—proposed by Gov. Jay Inslee—did not move out of the state Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources and Parks, but that didn’t alleviate concerns that tribal fishing gear continues to be blamed for the ongoing decline of salmon runs.

“Inslee knew this would put a target on our backs because he offered to include $500,000 for fish and wildlife enforcement to prevent the expected increase in harassment of tribal gillnetters,” said NWIFC Chairman Ed Johnstone.

Since the 1980s, tribes across the region have reduced their chinook salmon harvest by 60-95%.

“If simply limiting commercial gillnets in parts of a river system could recover salmon, Stillaguamish chinook would not continue to constrain state and federal harvest allocations each year during the North of Falcon (salmon season) planning process,” said Kadi Bizyayeva, a Stillaguamish Indian Tribe council member. The tribe hasn’t had a commercial fishery on chinook in more than 30 years.

“If conservation were truly their goal, elected leaders would do the hard work of protecting and restoring salmon habitat,” Johnstone said.

Salmon recovery requires bold actions, he said. These include preventing landowners from degrading and destroying habitat, protecting streams and rivers from high temperatures and low flows, and managing marine mammal predation of salmon. Tribal and state fisheries co-managers also call for increasing hatchery production to provide harvest opportunities and protect endangered runs that lack sufficient habitat.

Although the ban didn’t move forward, tribal leaders expressed frustration that the governor proposed it without their free, prior and informed consent. Member tribes of the NWIFC, Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission and Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians formally opposed this legislation.

“It’s the intention behind this legislation and the lack of consultation,” said NWIFC Vice Chair Lisa Wilson. “Tribes have had to put so much effort into shutting these bills down when we could have been putting our effort into working together to increase hatchery production and fix the habitat.”

The proposed ban would not have applied to tribal fisheries, but reinforces the misconception that the gear used in tribal fisheries is somehow harmful to salmon recovery, Johnstone said. Tribes use gillnets because they are selective by time, place and mesh size. Nets are the most efficient way to harvest salmon while causing the least amount of impact to other species. —Kari Neumeyer

**Seven Generations**

Members of the Tulalip Tribes seine in this 1950s image from a frequent contributor to The Seattle Times.

*Photo: Hibulb Cultural Center, Ray Fadich Collection*
Walking On

Larry Campbell Sr.
Wanaseah

Larry Campbell Sr., Wanaseah, passed away Feb. 1 surrounded by family. He was 74.

Campbell was an elder of the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community and worked for the tribe for nearly 30 years, most recently as the tribe’s community environmental health specialist.

Campbell previously served as the tribe’s historic preservation officer and manager of the tribe’s cultural resources program. He was instrumental in the tribe’s nationally recognized climate change work and was involved with the tribe’s history-making clam garden that began construction over the summer.

He also was involved with the Northwest Indian College, La Conner School District and several government agencies—all roles he took on to further the tribes’ cultural preservation and to protect the region’s natural resources.

Campbell was dedicated to gaining and sharing knowledge, from his days as a local fisherman to his travels around the world.

Campbell is survived by his children Ramona Campbell, Janet Centeno, Larry “sonner” Campbell Jr., Frankie Campbell and Marvin Campbell; sister Laverne “so sad wallets” Grove; grandchildren Lorena, Laura, Chris, Steven, Betsy, Helen, Freddy, Jerome, Donald, Sylvia, Janessa, Joshua, Kialoni and Layloni; great-grandchildren Leila, Anneka, Alina, Maci and Breyden.

He was preceded in death by the mothers of his children, Faith Mayhew-Campbell and Helen Campbell; parents Mary Ann Williams and Herman Campbell; grandparents Thomas Williams, Oceal Wanasar, Pete Campbell and Cecelia Baker; and daughters Hope Jimicum and Maryann Campbell.

John Hollowed

NWIFC legal advisor John James Hollowed Sr. died Feb. 21.

He was born May 10, 1957, to Robert and Maureen Hollowed.

Hollowed grew up in Itasca, Illinois, in a large Irish-Catholic family. In college, he earned a B.A. in biology from the University of Illinois and a M.S. in oceanography from Old Dominion University.

He met the love of his life, Anne, during graduate school. After graduation, they traveled to Seattle and immediately fell in love with the region’s natural beauty.

Hollowed graduated from law school at Seattle University in 1987 and began a career as a fearless advocate for land and water rights for the Indian tribes in the Pacific Northwest. He briefly worked with a county prosecutor’s office, the Department of Justice and as a fisheries manager with the Yakama Indian Nation.

Hollowed then joined the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission where he served for more than 35 years in various capacities: policy analyst, director of habitat services and legal advisor.

In 2018, the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed a 9th Circuit Court of Appeals decision in United States v. Washington, known as the Culvert Case. This case was built on Hollowed’s vision and foundational research—and will lead to enduring environmental protections for generations to come.

Hollowed loved to hike, camp, fish, hunt, ski and sail. He took regular trips to the San Juan Islands, always fraught with adventure, and even explored the Virgin Islands.

Hollowed is survived by his wife, Anne Hollowed; children John Hollowed Jr. (Cherish), Madolyn Krengel (Oliver) and Thomas Hollowed (Morgan Flake); three grandchildren; siblings Mary Tretter (David), Patricia Anderson (Jonathan), Robert Hollowed (Barbara), Thomas Hollowed (Danae) and Maureen Raistrick (David); and a large extended family.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

John Hollowed wore a Billy Frank Jr. shirt under his suit to the Supreme Court to hear arguments in the Culvert Case in 2018.
Youth celebrate Billy Frank Jr. Day

Billy Frank Jr. never sought laurels, said his son, Nisqually Chairman Willie Frank III, but he would have appreciated the advocacy for treaty rights and environmental protection shown at Billy Frank Jr. Day events celebrated across the region in March.

An event at River Ridge High School brought together tribal members, elected officials and students from throughout the North Thurston School District. The event included the Nisqually Canoe Family, art and science projects by students, and a presentation of the design for a statue of Billy Frank Jr. destined for the U.S. Capitol.

“He wouldn’t want the recognition,” Willie Frank said. “He’d want us to tell our story.”

At a celebration of Billy Frank Jr. in early March, youth created artwork using stamps depicting Billy, the salmon he fought for and a message that he embodied during his lifetime—that everyone can make a difference. Nisqually Indian Tribe

Statue sculptor selected

Artist Hai Ying Wu has been selected as the sculptor for the memorial statue of Billy Frank Jr. to be displayed at the National Statuary Hall at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. Wu is known for creating the fallen firefighter statue in Seattle’s Pioneer Square.

The proposed design above depicts Billy sitting by the Nisqually riverbank with “Tell Your Story” engraved on the pedestal. Wu is consulting the Nisqually Indian Tribe and the Frank family as he finalizes the design. ArtsWA