

# Harmony



*Working together to conserve and protect  
Washington's Tribal lands*

# Meandering again: Jimmycomelately Creek returns to its natural course

Jimmycomelately Creek is flowing along its natural route again – a route that will benefit endangered salmon by creating spawning grounds and wildlife habitat. But restoring the creek back to its natural route was no small task – requiring technical expertise, assistance, and work from the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe, USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the local community.

“Sedimentation was depositing at the mouth of Jimmycomelately Creek, restricting salmon passage and causing flooding over the banks of the creek,” said Byron Rot, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribal Habitat Program Manager. “Estuary wildlife habitat was declining due to lack of natural habitat,” he says.

The Tribe needed help in developing a plan to restore the Sequim Bay estuary along with Jimmycomelately and Dean Creeks, so they contacted the NRCS for their expertise in natural resource issues. NRCS, through the Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), provided technical and financial assistance to help the tribe reach their goals for the Sequim Bay restoration project.

“This project was initiated because of the Endangered Species Act. Restoring the summer chum spawning grounds is a critical

part of that process,” says Jamestown S’Klallam Tribal Chairman/Executive Director Ron Allen. “It is about protecting the environment for the salmon and restoring Jimmycomelately Creek back to its original route,” Mr. Allen says.

Sequim Bay estuary has faced many natural resource challenges in the last 100 years, including logging, road development, railroad construction, and the dredging of waterways. Wetlands were converted, drained, filled and eventually diked. The mouth of the estuary was filled to create a log storage

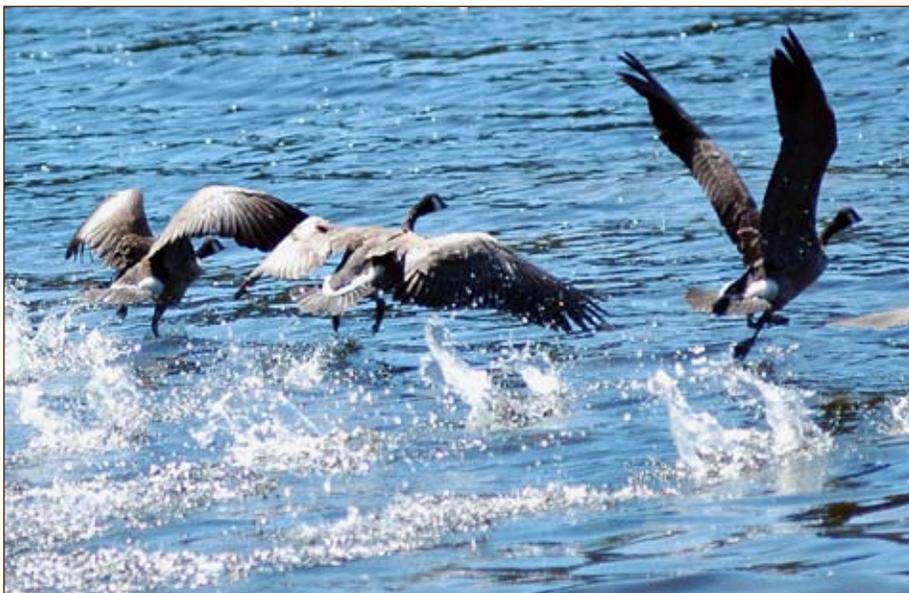
yard. Jimmycomelately and Dean Creeks were channelized to allow straight drainage into the bay to accommodate the log yard.

The straightening of the channel was good for the logging business, but it was not so good for the salmon.

The Tribe began restoring Jimmycomelately Creek in the summer of 2002. Woody riparian buffer plantings were established along both Jimmycomelately and Dean Creeks. The pilings and structures in Sequim Bay were removed, along with the log yard fill and

access roads. Culturally significant native plants were established in the estuary. The restoration of Sequim Bay estuary came to completion three years later, transforming Jimmycomelately and Dean Creeks and the estuary into a healthy wetland for fish and wildlife.

“This is an example of how it can be done – of how to bring back this water system to a healthy standard – all while being respectful of the environment,” Mr. Allen says.

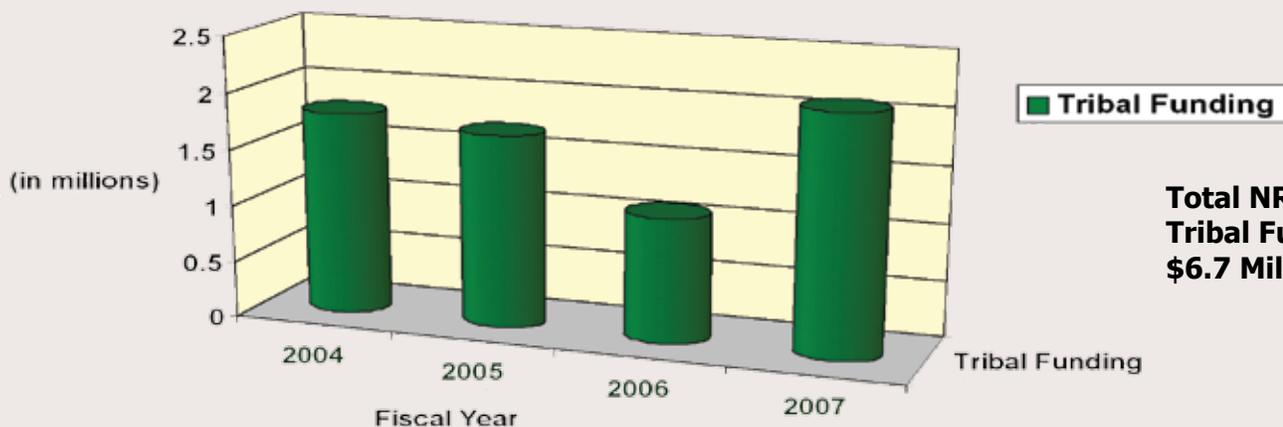


*Migratory waterfowl, like these geese seen here, are among the wildlife which will benefit from the Sequim Bay Estuary restoration.*

Jimmycomelately Creek and Sequim Bay have long been a traditional hunting, fishing, and shellfishing area for the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe.

“A wide array of wildlife including, waterfowl, raptors, and amphibians will benefit from restoring Sequim Bay estuary,” says Greg Fisher, a forester with the NRCS. “The primary beneficiary will be the summer chum salmon who utilize Jimmycomelately Creek,” he says.

## NRCS Tribal Funding



**Total NRCS Tribal Funding: \$6.7 Million**

## Beauty belies the beast of invasive weeds... Spokane Tribe, NRCS work to restore native habitat

By Lisa Wareham, Earth Team Volunteer

An ocean of pastel lavender and yellow flowers carpet the undulating landscape of the Spokane Tribe Indian Reservation – stretching as far as the horizon. These vibrant, even beautiful, “wildflowers” look harmless, but their deceptive beauty threatens an ecosystem, an upland bird species – and a way of life.

These “wildflowers” are among a number of invasive weeds that have overpowered native grasses that are used as food and cover for indigenous wildlife. Consequently, many species have died or have been driven off the reservation during the past several years.

To help reverse the spread of these invasive weeds, USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been working with the Spokane Tribe through the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) to bring back the native vegetation as well as the sharp-tail grouse – a species listed as threatened by the state of Washington.

The Tribe and the NRCS are re-establishing the sharp-tail grouse habitat starting – literally – from the ground up. By planting native grasses like bluebunch wheatgrass and Idaho fescue on 200 acres of abandoned cropland, conservationists hope to slow the spread of the invasive species, while re-establishing critical areas of native grasses.

The Tribe and NRCS also planted more than 5,000 native shrubs and plants in the spring of 2005 to create cover for the sharptail grouse and other species. The Tribe may re-plant some of the shrubs, David Wood, wildlife biologist for the Spokane Tribe of Indians Wildlife Department says, because some of the plantings have struggled.

In addition to restoring habitat, the Tribe is also attempting to return McCoy Lake,

which is often used for recreation, back to its original depth. Years ago a stream was diverted from its original path as irrigation for farmland. Over the years this diversion decreased the groundwater, which slowly started to dry up McCoy Lake.

Recently the Tribe purchased land and water rights to divert the stream back to its original channel and McCoy Lake destination.

In order to restore and enhance the stream’s riparian habitat, the Spokane Tribe used the NRCS’ Environmental Quality Incentives



*Spokane Tribal Biologist David Wood and NRCS District Conservationist Dave Kreft examine a recent planting of native grasses. These plantings will help fend off invasive species and establish sharp-tail grouse habitat.*

Program (EQIP) cost-share program. With NRCS technical and financial assistance, the Tribe built livestock exclusion fences and planted thousands of native trees and shrubs along the stream corridor.

As a result of the restoration efforts, a healthy mountain snow pack and abundant spring rainfall, the lake has risen seven feet since 2005.

“It’s great to see the Lake’s astonishing turnaround,” says Dave Kreft, NRCS District Conservationist. “Through their dedication, the Spokane Tribe has given new life to this lake,” he says.

Mr. Wood says Tribal members are very supportive of the NRCS and the Tribal Wildlife Department efforts to restore the land back to what it once was – back to a land with plentiful wildlife and maybe a few less “wildflowers.”



*Earth Team volunteers Devon Frederickson and Launi Van Tine search soil samples for any signs of cultural resource artifacts.*

## Working together - protecting Washington’s cultural resources

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has signed its first Cultural Resources Tribal Programmatic Agreement with the Squaxin Island Tribe and the Quinault Indian Nation. The purpose of the agreement is to coordinate cultural resource protection between NRCS and the Tribes.

Signing the programmatic agreements on behalf of NRCS was Washington State Conservationist Gus Hughbanks, with the Honorable Jim Peters of the Squaxin Island Tribe, and the Honorable Fawn Sharp of the Quinault Indian Nation.

“NRCS has a commitment to protect cultural, archaeological, and historical sites both on and off tribal lands,” Hughbanks said. “We are working closely with both Tribes to ensure that their concerns are considered before NRCS undertakes its conservation activities.”

Hughbanks said Cultural Resources Tribal Programmatic Agreements formalize the processes that NRCS and the tribes have worked through to treat cultural resource concerns.

NRCS has an obligation under the National Historic Preservation Act to consult with Tribes and private landowners who are requesting conservation assistance, as well as other interested stakeholders.

## Quinault Indian Nation receives Conservation Partnership Award

For their leadership in the restoration and protection of natural resources on tribal lands, the Quinault Indian Nation received a USDA Conservation Partnership Award, from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). USDA's Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Mark Rey, presented the awards at a special ceremony in Ocean Shores.

NRCS West Area Conservationist Rick Noble said the Quinault Indian Nation received the USDA award "for their assistance in improving water quality and stream habitat for the benefit of salmon, bull trout and other fish species."

According to Noble, three major conservation projects were completed on the Quinault Indian Reservation this year. "Through the

Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) the Quinault Indian Nation was able to remove barriers restricting fish passage and restore riparian areas reducing sediment delivery into streams," he said.

"These restoration efforts exemplify the fact that an area can be brought back to a naturally functioning system – providing environmental benefits and improving wildlife habitat, all while increasing salmon passages to spawning grounds," Noble said. "I'm also delighted that these projects will help re-establish historic and culturally significant elements for the Quinault Nation," he said.

"In short, these projects represent outstanding examples of cooperation between the Quinault Nation and NRCS," Noble said.



USDA's Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Mark Rey (left) presents the Conservation Partnership Award to Quinault Indian Nation President Fawn Sharp, Natural Resources Conservation Service Tribal Liaison Carri Gaines, and Quinault Indian Nation Vice Chairman Guy Capoeman at a recent ceremony.

## Ceremony marks return of salmon, tradition to Colville Reservation

Tom Louie didn't know if he would live to see the day when the spring Chinook came home again. It had been some 80 years since the last time they had made their way up the Columbia and Okanogan Rivers, into Omak Creek and onto the Colville Indian Reservation.

Still, for most of his life, he prayed for their return.

This past June, Mr. Louie's prayers were answered when 11 spring Chinook salmon once again swam into tribal waters. Their return infused new life into an important cultural event – the First Salmon Ceremony for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT). It also closed a gap between generations – a gap that had been widening since the spring Chinook were blocked from their annual migration up Omak Creek in north central Washington, some eight decades earlier.

The return of the salmon also signaled an enormous conservation achievement for the Tribe and for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) – the USDA agency that orchestrated the development of the plan that set the stage for the salmon's return.

Beginning in 1996, the Colville Confederated Tribes worked with NRCS to develop and

implement a plan to restore 40 miles of historical anadromous fish habitat on the reservation, improving riparian habitat,



Tribal councilman Andy Joseph harvests the first spring Chinook to be taken from Omak Creek in 80 years. The fish was prepared for the Colville Confederated Tribe's First Salmon Ceremony. (Photo by Keith Kistler)

reducing sedimentation into the creek, improving water quality, and implementing range management objectives.

"If we were going to be successful in bringing the spring Chinook back, we knew we had to have a blueprint to make a place for them to come home to," NRCS State Resource Conservationist, Frank Easter says. "The key to that successful blueprint," he says, "was keeping with the tribe's goals of achieving an ecosystems-based management system."

"NRCS was a critical link," CCT Fish and Wildlife Director Joe Peone says. "We simply didn't have the technical resources to get the plan started," he says, "and their assistance in range conservation and engineering was outstanding. Today, Mr. Peone says, "we continue to use NRCS' expertise – they're always available to help us move this process forward."

Conservation planning and project implementation will continue into the coming years, as Mr. Peone, his department, and other state and federal agencies work to restore and improve natural resources within the watershed.

"There's still a lot to do, but it's clear that what we've done so far is making a difference," Mr. Peone says. Even during the second lowest stream flow recorded, he says, the spring Chinook made it back. "Their return made

believers out of everyone who says they wouldn't or couldn't come home again," he says.

NRCS' Easter says his agency will continue working closely with the Tribe to provide technical and financial assistance. "This is a great achievement for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and for all of us who have worked to help bring the spring Chinook back home," he says. "It's important to all of us to continue to build upon this success," Easter says.