

# CONSERVATION Showcase

## Meandering again: Jimmycomelately Creek returns to its natural course

**J**immycomelately 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 project objectives were to restore the estuary habitat of Jimmycomelately Creek and South Sequim Bay for wildlife habitat and reduce the flood hazard potential,” says Mr. Rot. “Technical experts recommended the realignment of Jimmycomelately Creek into one of its historic channels,

reconnecting the link between the creek and tidal actions of the estuary,” he says.

The Tribe needed help in developing a plan to restore the Sequim Bay estuary along with Jimmycomelately and Dean



*Kurt Grinnell and Pat Adams, Jamestown S’Klallam Tribal members, dedicate Jimmycomelately Creek – with its new meandering flow – for the return of the summer chum salmon. Photo provided by Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.*

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



*A new day dawns over Sequim Bay estuary, home to an abundant array of wildlife.*

*“A wide array of wildlife including fish, waterfowl, raptors, and amphibians will benefit from restoring Sequim Bay estuary.”*

Greg Fisher  
NRCS

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.

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 fish, waterfowl, raptors, and amphibians will benefit from restoring Sequim Bay estuary,” says Greg Fisher, NRCS Forester. “The primary beneficiary will be the summer chum salmon who will utilize the restored Jimmycomelately Creek,” he says.

The Tribe began Jimmycomelately Creek and Sequim Bay estuary project in the early 1990s, to address problems associated with declining fish populations and increased flooding.

Sequim Bay estuary has faced many natural resource challenges in the last 100 years. The late 18th century brought logging, road development, railroad construction, and the dredging of waterways. During that time, wetlands were converted, drained, filled and

eventually diked. The mouth of the estuary was filled to create a log storage yard along with access roads into the log yard. Jimmycomelately and Dean Creeks were channelized to allow straight drainage into the bay to accommodate the log yard. Straightening of the channel was good for the logging business, but it was not so good for the salmon.

The Tribe began restoring meanders in Jimmycomelately Creek in the summer of 2002 in order to restore its normal hydrology. Woody riparian buffer plantings were established along both Jimmycomelately and Dean Creeks, as well. 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 and a

plug was created in the artificial drainage channel segment of Jimmycomelately Creek to divert streamflow into the newly constructed meandering channel.

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.



*Migratory fowl like these Bufflehead ducks make Sequim Bay Estuary a seasonal home.*

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*Log and root wad structures in and along Jimmycomelately Creek, create wildlife habitats an essential part of designing the new meandering path of the creek.*

*“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.”*

Ron Allen  
Jamestown S’Klallam Tribal  
Chairman/Executive Director



*A single Canada goose trolls around the bay looking for breakfast.*

According to NRCS’ Fisher, this project will improve water quality in Sequim Bay by decreasing the leachate from the log yard, which will benefit a variety of organisms that inhabit the bay.

“The restored Creeks are important spawning habitat for Hood Canal summer chum salmon as well as being home to steelhead, cutthroat trout, and coho salmon,” Mr. Fisher says. “In addition, the restored estuary will provide habitat for eelgrass, migratory fowl, and several species of clams.”

“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.

*Kelly Sprute, NRCS Washington  
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