
Lummi Nation: Our Strategies

Narrator: The Lummi people feel that it's their responsibility to help the salmon survive.

Leroy Deardorff, Environmental Director, Lummi Natural Resources: It's our inherent right to do it, and it's slowly disappearing, so we have to do something to rescue it.

Doralee Sanchez, Culture Education Coordinator, Lummi Nation School: I think that everybody feels strongly that our salmon live on, you know, and it's an instinct, that, because we are salmon people. And if the salmon die, it's almost like we'll die. You know, we're not just stepping back and letting it happen. We're stepping up and doing something about it.

Frank Bob, Watershed Restoration Assistant, Lummi Natural Resources: It's like repairing Mother Nature. It means a lot to me to be able to say that I was, I helped replace some of the scars and wounds that was inflicted upon Mother Nature.

Willy Jones, Lummi Elder: We have our own fisheries, Natural Resources Department, that takes the lead not only in our tribe, but I think in the state keeping data and records. And we have our own fish hatchery and oyster hatcheries here that we do research on salmon and shellfish.

Frank Bob: Bringing back the habitat will bring back the fish.

Narrator: The Lummi Nation Natural Resources Department is involved in many kinds of projects to fix the damaged salmon habitat.

Merle Jefferson, Director, Lummi Natural Resources: I have been director for 25 years. We have about eight main departments that I oversee.

Narrator: The Lummis have built many logjams in the Nooksack River. Logjams are an important part of the salmon's habitat.

Merle Jefferson: A long time ago, there used to be a policy where they took out all the logs. The state said they were bad, so they took out all the logs. And now we are putting them back in, logjams back in, because habitat is key, you know, for the salmon.

Frank Bob: And what the logjams do is they create shelter for juveniles as they're migrating upstream. They create pools, and the pools are deep and the water's cooler, and there's shade, and it protects them from predators. And there's food for them—leaves, bugs collect in there.



Narrator: Trees are also important to salmon habitat. So the Lummis are replanting areas where trees have been removed.

Frank Bob: All the conifers that you see here were inter-planted. We do the inter-planting to re-introduce conifers into areas where there is no conifers.

Narrator: They're improving drainage in critical areas. This helps decrease erosion and keeps the streams from becoming clogged with soil runoff.

Narrator: It takes many partners working together to bring the salmon back. The Lummis work with government agencies, public and private organizations, and other American Indian groups to help the salmon population recover.

Leroy Deardorff: We are involved with planning for the cuts where a lot of these forest companies go. If you cut these trees, does that mean the whole area is going to slide off into a stream somewhere, or is it stable enough to cut? And we are involved in helping make those decisions with the Department of Natural Resources, as well as the Department of Fisheries here in the state of Washington.

Wendy Scherrer, Executive Director (Retired), Nooksack Salmon Enhancement

Association: This Ten Mile Creek project with the Four Mile Creek tributary is an example of partnership and cooperation. So, this was an imperative from the Department of Ecology to clean up particularly the dairy farms and the berry farms because the Lummi Tribe had a shellfish industry. And it was all closed down after the pollution from the farmers resulted in water quality deteriorating downstream.

John Belisle, Owner, BelleWood Acres Farm: I'm standing in front of all these trees that we planted last year, as little plugs. They were donated by the county government and the farmers. We've given away well over 70,000 trees for stream enhancements. The Lummi Indians need to have fish. You know, it's only the right thing to do, to have an environment that fish can come in. It's only the right thing to do, to have an environment that's clean and pristine.

Narrator: The Lummi are increasing the salmon population by raising fish in facilities called hatcheries.

Linda Delgado, Salmon Enhancement Manager, Lummi Natural Resources: The salmon are spawned. The eggs are taken and incubated and hatched, and eventually put into a pond where they are fed until they become a size where they can be released into the ocean to go and mature and return back to where they came from.

Narrator: The Lummi Natural Resources hatchery at Skookum Creek cooperates with the Washington State Hatchery at Kendall Creek to rescue endangered South Fork Spring Chinook salmon.

Crystal Conley, Fish Specialist, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife: What we do in this room is, once the fish are brought in from the wild we start feeding them our hatchery food. So once they reach maturity, the fish will be transferred back to Skookum Hatchery, which is where they will be spawned. And their eggs, and with the small fry that hatch from them, will be released from Skookum. They'll travel over 30 miles in the freshwater. And then they'll go out in the ocean where they can travel up to 2500 miles. Some have been found up in Alaska and Canada, where they then return back to their birthplace, to Skookum Hatchery, to spawn.

Narrator: The Lummi children of today will be the next generation to care for the salmon. They are learning about the science tied to bringing the salmon back. At the Lummi Nation School, students are raising juvenile salmon, called "fry," which they release every spring into the waters on their lands. As the students' fry are released, an elder leads a ceremony.

Jack Cagey, Lummi Elder: We're here to do a ceremony for the little salmon that we're going to release in the creek here. So be respectful, honoring the spirits that are here to witness the release of these babies into the creek. Praying that they'll be back in four years to bring us meat for the winter.