

Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
Chairman Brian Cladoosby

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Comments on Skagit County Salmon Heritage Program

Swinomish Indian Reservation, Washington - The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community has received notice of the Skagit County Salmon Heritage Program. Through the Program, the County has announced its desire to purchase easements on certain streams in Skagit County.

"After a decade of skirting legal requirements to provide buffers around critical areas in the agricultural zone, it appears that Skagit County is still not willing to comply with the law. After having several similar programs rejected as non-compliant, Skagit County has produced another program that does not satisfy the Growth Management Act," observed Swinomish Tribal Chairman Brian Cladoosby.

Cladoosby continued, "For the last year and a half, the Tribe, County and others were engaged in a collaborative effort to resolve our litigation and help Skagit County comply with the law. I am deeply disappointed that the County chose to walk away from that process. As a result of going it alone, the County produced a Program that does not satisfy GMA and provides no guaranty that critical areas needed to save endangered Chinook salmon will be protected."

Cladoosby concluded, "While I'm pleased that Skagit County has finally acknowledged its obligation to protect fish and fish habitat, this program provides no solid protection to fish. Shockingly, Skagit County's own 2003 Environmental Impact Statement found that 'a system that encourages voluntary actions by farmers, including the adoption of BMPs, NRCS-based farm plans, and CREP will result in ongoing degradation of fish habitat and critical areas.' It appears that ongoing degradation is Skagit County's plan to protect critical areas. The Tribe is currently evaluating it's options, but we will remain vigilant in our commitment to protect our treaty rights, our livelihoods and our cultural heritage."

The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community is a federally recognized Indian Tribe. Its reservation is located 65 miles North of Seattle, Washington on Fidalgo Island and includes approximately 7000 acres of uplands and 3000 acres of tidelands.