



# CULTURAL RESOURCES

## INTRODUCTION

Given the Tribe's location on Hood Canal, many of its traditions, ceremonies, and cultural resources are rooted in the Tribe's connection to the marine waters, shoreline, and the natural environment. As a result, climate change—in particular, its effects on coastal processes—may have a pronounced impact on the Tribe's cultural and historical sites and traditions.

The Tribe's cultural resources include the historical and archaeological sites that contribute to S'Klallam and regional history. The Tribe's important resources also include gathering sites and traditional plant communities.

Many of the natural resources the Tribe relies upon for commercial and subsistence reasons also have cultural significance. These include fish, shellfish, and associated harvest areas, as well as hunting areas. In addition to continued research around the Tribe's history, Cultural Resources Department staff are responsible for maintaining and enhancing the use of the S'Klallam language and providing educational materials for visitors to the Tribe and its facilities.

This chapter first provides a brief history of the Tribe and its village at Point Julia, and then it presents a summary of climate change impacts on the Tribe's cultural resources, including traditional foods and historical sites.

## BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PORT GAMBLE S'KLALLAM TRIBE

The S'Klallam were originally called the Nux Sklai Yem, or Strong People. Historically, they were part of a large group of Salish-speaking tribes that extended from northwestern Oregon to the central British Columbia coast and inland along the Fraser and Columbia rivers. The Salish people were well-established in the Puget Sound basin by the year 1400, having arrived from the interior by way of the Skagit and Fraser rivers. The Salish have long occupied the shores of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Admiralty Inlet, and Puget Sound, adapting their lives to the natural bounty of the land, rivers, and sea. Permanent villages of plank and pole houses provided shelter for groups of extended families through the wet winters; in the spring, families made their seasonal rounds, camping at traditional fishing, hunting, and gathering sites throughout their territory.

The S'Klallams lived in at least 15 villages along the southern shore of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. They enjoyed friendly relations with their Salish-speaking neighbors the Twana and shared fishing sites with them in Hood Canal. The first known contact between the S'Klallam Tribe and Europeans occurred in 1799, when English and Spanish explorers penetrated the Strait of Juan de Fuca in pursuit of the legendary Northwest Passage. After the explorers came fur traders, missionaries, prospectors, and finally, permanent settlers.



## THE S'KLALLAM VILLAGE AT POINT JULIA

In November 1853, Isaac Stevens, Governor and Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the new Washington territory, arrived in Olympia and announced that he would use his treaty-making power to extinguish the Indian land title. That same year, Tribal members were moved from other villages to Point Julia to make room for the growing Port Gamble Mill. In the winter of 1855, the S'Klallam, Chemakum, and Twana tribes gathered at the northeastern point of the Kitsap Peninsula—known as Point No Point—to negotiate a treaty with Stevens. On a cold January day, the S'Klallams signed away their title to 438,430 acres of ancestral lands.



In 1934, the United States government purchased Point Julia and surrounding parcels owned by the Puget Mill Company to create the 1,231-acre Port Gamble S'Klallam Reservation, with an official proclamation issued in 1938. That same decade, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe successfully petitioned the federal government to recognize its independent Tribal status.

In 1939, gasoline was poured on some houses at Point Julia that the Health Department had previously condemned, and the village was burned to the ground. Following the arson, and under pressure from the federal government, the S'Klallams relocated to the bluff above Point Julia. Some older members of the Tribe did not want to leave the spit, having lived there most of their lives. One Tribal member recalls an elder who had to be forced out of her home: she sat in an old chair, crying and singing, while they packed her belongings out [1].

Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Port Gamble S'Klallam began to assert more authority over their economic development. The Point No Point Tribal fish hatchery was established in 1976 at the base of the bluff on Point Julia, at the mouth of Little Boston Creek. In the 1980s, the Tribe created a gas station, store, mobile home park, and 20-acre business park on reservation lands. Tribal staff was increased from about 12 to more than 50 people. An Economic Development Authority was created to support existing operations and to create new enterprises, and the Tribe began to administer Federal economic development grants [1].

Although the reservation is small, the Tribe continues to have the right to access and harvest resources in its traditional (usual and accustomed) areas beyond the reservation. The Port Gamble S'Klallams have continued their traditions of resource utilization through fishing, hunting, clam digging and other activities. Communal sharing of the reservation land has helped to preserve essential social and cultural traditions [1]. Still, as climate change affects these natural resources, it will also affect the Tribe's cultural resources, as described in the remainder of this chapter.

## CLIMATE IMPACTS ON CULTURAL RESOURCES

Tribal members have observed environmental changes for hundreds of years and passed that traditional knowledge down through the generations. For example, Tribal members have reported changes in the availability of materials that they have traditionally gathered. These observations and traditional ecological knowledge can be useful today and into the future, to help the Tribe understand how climate changes could interact with other environmental changes and to determine what they could do to build continued resilience.



Climate change is expected to affect tribal and place-based communities differently than typical Western communities [2]. This is due to the fact that many tribal economies and cultural identities, including those of the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, are reliant upon the use of natural resources and wildlife [2]. As climate and non-climate stressors combine, the result may be a future with reduced availability of culturally significant plants, animals, and sites [2].

## FISH AND SHELLFISH

The importance of fish, especially salmon, and shellfish is widespread throughout the Pacific Northwest's tribal communities. With regard to salmon specifically, changing streamflow and increased stream temperature throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century could affect the growth and survival of salmonids across many life stages [3]. Those impacts, while most acute for salmon in freshwater streams, will work in tandem with climate and non-climate stressors in the marine environment (e.g., ocean acidification, pollution) that could affect salmon during marine life stages [3]. Climatic changes are expected to affect salmon physiology as well as habitat.



Shellfish physiology and habitat are also being affected by climate change, and such impacts are expected to continue and increase in severity in the decades to come. Ocean acidification has been observed to impede shell formation [4]. Sea level rise is expected to reduce shellfish habitat [5]. Rising temperatures are expected to favor the growth of harmful algal blooms, which produce toxins that accumulate in shellfish and make them poisonous [6].

A severe reduction in salmon and shellfish abundance would mean the potential loss of Tribal ceremonies and customs that use these species. The Tribe's cultural resources staff note that both salmon and shellfish are important food items used at funerals, weddings, and other important community and family events. Clam bakes, in particular, are a central aspect of S'Klallam traditional foods and always a part of ceremonial events.



More information on these climate impacts can be found in the Salmon and Shellfish chapters.

## TRADITIONAL FOODS AND GATHERING MATERIALS

More than 280 types of food are considered to be part of the traditional diet of the Coast Salish peoples [7]. Through the exploration of archaeological sites across the Puget Sound region and traditional knowledges passed down through generations, these foods are known to include everything from salmon and oysters to wapato and huckleberry [7]. However, modern diets are less complex and tend to include fewer food sources [7].

As with salmon and shellfish, the combination of climate change and non-climate stressors (such as land development and the privatization of traditional use areas) could impede access to and the availability of



other traditional foods and gathering materials. These resources provide sustenance and form the basis of cultural connections through storytelling, ceremonies, and other community-gathering activities [8]. A 2013 study by Lynn et al. found that tribal harvesters have reported changes in the harvest times of some traditional foods [8].

Tribal staff report that the availability of traditional foods and gathering materials has already been reduced due to nearby urban development, particularly in the Tribe's primary traditional use areas. This development can lead to overexploitation or conversion of natural areas (including water resources) as competing uses (e.g., residential development, recreation, commercial fishing) reduce or restrict access to gathering sites. One such example is the loss of hunting and gathering areas on the Coyle peninsula near Dabob Bay, with increased privatization of land. With future climate change, the productivity of remaining areas could be altered or altogether lost [8].

## HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

The Tribal Historical Preservation Office (THPO) maintains the S'Klallam Tribe's historical and archaeological sites. THPO staff consult with federal, state, and local governments on cultural resources and possible impacts to those resources from a variety of causes.

The vast majority of the Tribe's archaeological sites are in coastal areas and are vulnerable to erosion and sea level rise. Within the reservation, the Tribe has the authority to protect these sites (e.g., Point Julia). However, culturally significant sites outside the reservation in the Tribe's primary traditional use area cannot be protected under the Tribe's authority. The Tribe can only provide input during public scoping periods or through Tribal consultations. It is therefore difficult to assess the future of culturally significant sites located away from the reservation with regard to either human development or climate change.

Because many of these sites are located along or near the coast, sea level rise is of particular concern. While relative sea level rise varies based on the geography of specific locations, it is possible that some historical and archaeological sites could be permanently inundated if no steps are taken to protect them.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Over the centuries, the Tribe has created a self-reliance and cohesion that strengthens the community and contributes to its resilience in the face of a wide variety of stresses. The Tribe's cultural resources support this cohesion by allowing Tribal members to maintain a positive connection to their culture and traditions. Many Tribal initiatives therefore explicitly recognize the importance of preserving these resources.

The Tribe supports the documentation of cultural resource sites through archaeological work and ethnohistorical research. Current initiatives to protect cultural resources include archaeological work on Point Julia, as well as the documentation of Indian Island as a cultural landscape. The Tribe is currently working to learn from these sites before climate change limits access to these areas or significantly degrades them.



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