



Ron Garner
24707 Florence Acres Road
Monroe, WA 98272

June 27, 2016

Mr. Charles "Guy" Miller
Chairman,
Skokomish Tribal Council
Skokomish Indian Tribe
80 North Tribal Center Road
Shelton, WA 98584

Dear Chairman Miller:

This letter is in follow up to a visit by Frank Urabeck to your office on Wednesday, June 15, and his several subsequent telephone calls with your executive secretary, Darlyn Warren. Mr. Urabeck, as a representative of the Puget Sound Anglers, a well recognized long established sport fishing/conservation organization of more than 7,000 members, was seeking a meeting with you to discuss the Skokomish Indian Tribe's decision earlier this year to not allow non-tribal sport fishing for hatchery Chinook salmon in traditional sport fishing reaches of the Skokomish River. Sport fishing for Chinook and Coho salmon has occurred here for many decades as these fisheries are extremely popular with many thousands of Washington citizens. Several years ago sport fishing was significantly restricted by the State of Washington to minimize gear conflicts between sport and tribal fishers. A number of other actions have been taken to accommodate tribal concerns.

The purpose of this letter is to ask the Skokomish Tribe to reconsider its position and allow sport fishing to continue for hatchery Chinook salmon during the coming month of August. We are responding to the public call by Lorraine Loomis, Chair, Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, for the recreational fishing community and Puget Sound tribes to come together and cooperate where we have mutual interests of saving and restoring our salmon and steelhead resources to harvestable levels. We have read the U.S. Department of Interior's Solicitor General's January 15, 2016 opinion regarding the tribal reservation's southern boundary. While we, the State of Washington and others may not agree with that opinion, we accept that this will likely have to be resolved in the Federal courts, which may take a number of years. Consequently, until the issue is resolved by the courts, we reluctantly accept that we can be denied access to that portion of the Skokomish River that you believe to be part of the southern boundary of the reservation – if the Skokomish Tribes elects to do this.

In a June 9 op-ed article, published in the Shelton-Mason County Journal, Lorraine Loomis, Chair of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, stressed the importance of cooperation between the co-managers of the salmon resource (Puget Sound tribes and the State of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife), and the need to work together on fish habitat protection and restoration, as well as seeking greater production of salmon through our hatchery programs. We agree with Ms. Loomis.



However, the co-managers must recognize a third partner. This is the non-tribal sport fishing community. We too care deeply about our fish resources as evidenced by the many fish habitat restoration and enhancement project accomplished by Puget Sound Angler chapters and other organizations. Our members also serve on a number of governmental/citizen committees dedicated to restoring ESA listed salmon and steelhead runs. Our citizen/constituent based political power is very significant, as has often been demonstrated. Without our involvement further significant improvements to habitat and increased hatchery production is unlikely. Also, just keeping hatchery production at current levels will continue to be a struggle and requires citizen support. Without meaningful fishing opportunities, that support will wane.

If sport fishers continue to see our fishing opportunities diminished, especially when not conservation driven, then we will question continued funding of hatchery programs where we receive little or no benefit. Consequently, we are approaching the Skokomish and all Puget Sound tribes in a spirit of cooperation. Unless we are all together, we all will lose. A good model of successful cooperation was the effort by three northern Puget Sound Tribes, three significant sport fishing/conservation groups (Puget Sound Anglers, Coastal Conservation Association and the Steelhead Trout Club) and the Department of Fish and Wildlife, that saved five early winter Puget Sound hatchery steelhead programs in April.

We will be sponsoring a gathering of the public at the George Adams hatchery on Saturday, July 30, at 1 p.m. to discuss the tribal closure of the Skokomish River Chinook fishery. You are invited to speak to the tribal perspective on this issue. A representative of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife may speak as well. Please let us know of your interest.

Again, repeating my earlier thought: "Unless we are all together, we all will lose." Allowing a sport fishery to take place this August will demonstrate that the Skokomish Indian Tribe wants to work with the sport fishing/conservation community. Our hand is extended to you.

Mr. Urabek is our contact for the July 30 event and can be reached by telephone at 253-208-7323; by email: urabeck@comcast.net.

Thank you for giving our views consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Ron Garner
President
Puget Sound Anglers State Board
16 Chapters Statewide

Cc: Lorraine Loomis
WDFW Director Jim Unsworth



WDFW Ron Warren

WDFW John Long

Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission

Senator Maria Cantwell

Senator Patty Murray

Senator Rick Larson

Governor Jay Inslee

NOAA Will Stelle-West Coast Administrator

Senator Kirk Pearson, Chair Senate Natural Resources

Senator Pam Roach, President Pro Tempore