



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

CITATION

PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION AWARD

COAST SALISH

In recognition of the Coast Salish – U.S. Geological Survey Tribal Water Quality Project and its collaborative efforts to assess water-quality issues related to ecologically, economically, and culturally important marine resources of the Pacific Northwest

In 2008, the U.S. Geological Survey formed a new partnership with the Coast Salish Nation to study water quality and help restore near shore marine resources across the Salish Sea, Puget Sound, and Georgia Basin. The Coast Salish Nation, a newly formed consortium of Western Washington Tribes and British Columbia First Nations, has recently gathered to develop policy under one voice. The USGS scientists participated with Canoe Families and skippers to design and conduct a water-quality study across the vast area of the Salish Sea spanning international borders, cultures, science disciplines and interest groups. The 2008 study was a remarkable success and in its first year collected more than 42,000 water-quality data points along 570 miles of ancestral waterways. Surface temperature, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen and turbidity, essential to food web dynamics, fish spawning, rearing, foraging, and migration, and human livelihood were measured every 10 seconds behind traditional canoes as part of the annual Coast Salish Tribal Journey, which in July 2008, ended at Cowichan, British Columbia. These data support the development of policy to manage physical processes (watershed, hydrology, near shore circulation, water quality), biologic-ecologic interactions (food web dynamics, migratory habitat connectivity, essential fish habitats for spawning, rearing, foraging) and land use activities that impact sustainability of habitat structure and ecosystem function. These data have been identified as key gaps towards recovering Chinook salmon, listed under the Endangered Species Act, and Interior-trust species including bull trout and marbled murrelet. The partnership is leading to future Tribal Journey science activities and is recognized for its unique blend of state-of-the art science and rich traditional knowledge that will help to identify critical water-quality and environmental issues and trends through future journeys. For their partnership that blends traditional resource knowledge with modern science the Coast Salish and the U.S. Geological Survey are granted the Department of the Interior's Partners in Conservation Award.