



**PORT GAMBLE S'KLALLAM TRIBE
NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT**

31912 Little Boston Rd. NE – Kingston, WA 98346

September 8, 2021



Pinky Feria Mingo
Environmental Health Manager
Jefferson County Public Health
615 Sheridan Street
Port Townsend, WA 98368

Dear Ms. Mingo;

We are writing in support of your efforts to prevent a potentially calamitous threat to the successful collaborative work that the undersigned and other Federal, State, and local agencies, partners organizations, plus hundreds of individual community members, have engaged in over nearly 30 years to support the restoration and recovery of ESA summer chum in Chimacum Creek.

The Hood Canal Coordinating Council's 2015 Prioritization of Salmon Stocks ranked the Chimacum Creek ESA summer chum eighth out of a few hundred identified Puget Sound salmon stocks. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife identifies this section of Chimacum Creek as Priority Habitat, providing spawning grounds for summer chum (*Oncorhynchus keta*), winter steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and coho (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*). Odd-year pink salmon (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*) and fall chum (*Oncorhynchus keta*) are also present and spawn downstream, and cutthroat (*Oncorhynchus clarki*) are found here as well. Many other species of fauna and flora have also benefited from this restoration and protection of riparian habitat, which in turn contributes to water quality for shellfish in Port Townsend Bay.

Efforts to remove the structure and debris that are perched at the top of a steep and eroding slope above Chimacum Creek are gaining traction, but too late as the winter rains approach and a clean-up contractor has yet to bid the advertised project. With every passing day the likelihood increases that the asbestos-laden trailer will succumb to gravity as the slope erodes beneath it. It will land squarely in Chimacum Creek, upon ESA listed summer chum redds(nests). Clean up of the wreckage from the creek will be messy, difficult and costly. Creek waters will scatter the mess downstream for a great distance.

Removing this material after it slides into the Creek and adjacent wetlands and impacts the riparian, wetland, and estuary habitats here and downstream on into the



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marine waters of Port Townsend Bay will be difficult and at some level impossible. This is a prime example of prevention being both better, and far cheaper, than treatment. We have a brief window of opportunity now as spawning season begins and before winter storms increase the risk.

Getting this site cleaned up has long been a priority for the undersigned. The County is the only entity with a mechanism for cleanup. The cleanup has moved from a priority to an EMERGENCY. It is time for Jefferson County to pull out all stops and get the site cleaned up BEFORE the trailer slides to the creek.

Time is of the essence and, as the 2021 HCCC's Hood Canal Salmon Recovery Program specifies, "Reinforcing protection of high-quality salmon habitat is of highest priority".

Sincerely,

Paul McCollum
Director, Natural Resources Department
Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe