

Understanding Tribal Participation in Collaborative Restoration:

An Exploration of the Qwuloolt Estuary Restoration Project

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Abstract

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Large-scale collaborative estuary restoration in the Puget Sound region of Washington State represents a unique opportunity to further salmon recovery efforts and meet regional habitat restoration targets while engaging treaty tribes of Western Washington. In the Puget Sound, engagement of tribal partners is essential to successful fisheries management and salmon recovery, yet has a complicated and challenging history. This paper explores what motivated the Tulalip Tribes to participate in one such project to gain insight into how to approach collaborative restoration in the Puget Sound that successfully engages tribal partners. The Qwuloolt Estuary Restoration project, led collaboratively by the Tulalip Tribes and a group of state and federal agencies is one example of the potential of this approach. Based on a series of key informant interviews with those involved in Qwuloolt, this analysis explores the motivation for the Tulalip Tribes' participation in this restoration project. Six factors emerged as contributing significantly to the Tulalip Tribes' sustained participation in the Qwuloolt project:

opportunity to maintain and strengthen value of tribal treaty rights, an imminent threat to culturally significant resources, concern for future generations, commitment to place in perpetuity, support from tribal leadership, and a willingness to build relationships and identify common ground with relevant non-tribal communities. These factors are discussed individually and concluding recommendations for improving approaches to tribal engagement in large-scale collaborative restoration projects are offered.

I. Introduction:

Large-scale collaborative estuary restoration projects (over 100 acres) are emerging as an approach to addressing the environmental challenges of the Puget Sound region. These projects have significant potential to positively impact environmental conditions and contribute to ongoing efforts to protect and restore Puget Sound and its resources. This approach is significant both because of the importance of estuaries to the overall health of the Sound and because it is successfully engaging the region's treaty tribes in collaborative management of resources and spaces (see table 1). Collaborative restoration represents an opportunity to restore the habitat and resources of Puget Sound in partnership with the tribes – as opposed to approaches which alienate or disproportionately impact their access to resources. Understanding the motivation of treaty tribes to participate in these collaborative projects can inform future projects and help ensure successful tribal engagement. The Qwuloolt Estuary Restoration Project, completed in 2015 under the collaborative leadership of the Tulalip Tribes and a number of state and federal agencies, in partnership with local government and landowners, is one example of this collaborative approach to restoration in the region. This analysis explores the motivation of the Tulalip Tribes to participate in this large-scale collaborative restoration project, addressing the following research questions:

1. What motivated the Tulalip Tribes to participate in the Qwuloolt Project?
2. What can be learned from the Qwuloolt Project to support future large-scale collaborative restoration projects (particularly as it relates to tribal engagement)?

The paper first discusses the importance and increasing complexity of estuary restoration in Puget Sound, the role of the treaty tribes as essential collaborators, and defines collaboration in the context of large-scale restoration. After a brief discussion of methodology, it then analyzes factors which motivated Tulalip Tribes’ sustained participation in the Qwuloolt Project. Finally, recommendations for future large-scale collaborative restoration work based on the findings are offered.

Table 1. Examples of tribal involvement in large-scale estuary restoration in Puget Sound

Restoration Project Name	Location	Acres Restored	Tribe Involved as Collaborator
Qwuloolt Estuary (Tulalip Tribes 2016)	Snohomish County	400	Tulalip Tribes
Nisqually Delta (Nisqually Tribe 2016)	Pierce County	761	Nisqually Tribe
Skokomish Island Estuary (RCO 2016)	Pierce County	319	Skokomish Tribal Nation

II. Background:

A. Importance of Estuary Restoration in Puget Sound:

Estuaries are important connective ecosystems, influencing the health and productivity of the entire region (Fresh et al. 2011). They generate invaluable ecosystem services by filtering water and acting as natural flood barriers (NWIFC 2016a) and provide crucial protective habitat for juvenile salmon, forage fish, and a diversity of other organisms (Simenstad et al. 1982; Duffy et al. 2005, Cereghino 2015). Estuaries are particularly important salmon habitat and their restoration is recognized as a key strategy for salmon recovery (Shared Strategy Development Committee 2007). Because salmon is a cultural keystone species and important economic resource for Coast Salish peoples (Amberson et al. 2016, Donatuto et al. 2014, Garibaldi &

Turner 2004, Fresh et al. 2011, Lynn et al. 2013), and a key focus of treaty rights, tribal communities have a clear stake in estuary restoration. The important ecological role of estuaries to adjacent environments and communities that depend on them is recognized by the Puget Sound Partnership (PSP), a state agency tasked with protecting and restoring Puget Sound. PSP links habitat recovery (mainly estuaries) to myriad other targets: from orca recovery to clean swimming beaches (PSP 2016), highlighting the importance of these ecosystems. Accordingly, PSP has set ambitious estuary recovery targets which include the restoration of 7,380 acres of estuary within the Puget Sound basin by 2020, of which only 2,260 acres had been restored in 2015 (PSP 2016).

Despite their important ecological role, Puget Sound's estuaries have largely been degraded; diked and converted into agricultural land, paved over in the name of industry and development, and polluted by runoff from an increasingly urbanized region. Approximately 74% of vegetated tidal wetlands (primarily estuaries) have been lost in Puget Sound over the past 125 years (Simenstad et al. 2011) and urban development is estimated to bring urban land cover area up to 25% of coastal Puget Sound by 2050 (Alberti et al. 2016), further threatening estuarine habitat (Cereghino 2015). Pressure on dwindling estuaries continues to increase and more and faster restoration is needed to reach restoration targets (Cereghino 2015). Achieving these goals is partially reliant on creating restoration projects that garner the support and account for the needs of an increasingly complex set of stakeholders (agriculture, development interests, industry) and tribes that live, work, and depend on estuaries and their resources.

B. Treaty Rights and Tribes as Essential Collaborators:

The treaty tribes of Western Washington are guaranteed rights and privileges based on treaties negotiated in 1854-5, which ceded their land but retained their rights to fish, hunt, and harvest on traditional lands (NWIFC 2016). Treaty rights are not a grant of fishing rights *to* the treaty tribes, but a granting of land rights *from* the tribes (NWIFC 2016) and are considered the “supreme law of the land.” While these treaties went into effect over 150 years ago, their enforcement has been largely ignored until relatively recently when a series of court decisions gave them legal force through interpretation. Treaty tribes in Puget Sound are legally entitled to (among other things) 50% of salmon (United States v. Washington 1974) and shellfish harvest (excluding those taken for ceremonial and subsistence purposes) (United States v. Washington 1994) co-management of fisheries (US v. Washington 1974) and healthy and protected habitat that support these resources and thus maintain the value of treaty rights (United States v. Washington 1980, Monson 1981).

The interpretation of treaty rights to include protected habitat is especially relevant in a rapidly urbanizing Puget Sound where habitat degradation and stream alteration threatens salmon runs (Brown and Footen 2010, TITWW 2011, NWIFC 2013) and puts the tribes in a unique position to advance restoration efforts (Brown and Footen 2010). This initial interpretation has been upheld through the recent Culverts Case which required the state to remove culverts blocking fish passage – essentially fragmenting and reducing salmon habitat. The obligation of the state to maintain habitat is particularly relevant to restoration, as are tribal co-management rights.

C. Defining Collaboration:

Collaborative environmental policy processes are on the rise and are widely used by agencies and decision-makers to address complex environmental and natural resource management issues

(Singleton 2002, Schuett et al. 2001, Cestero 1999, Conley and Moote 2003, Mandarano 2008). Emerging from Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) (Singleton 2002, Mandarano 2008), theories of political devolution (Singleton 2002), and ecosystem-based management (Cestero 1999, Singleton 2002), the benefits of collaborative environmental approaches as an alternative method of resolving multi-stakeholder environmental issues are widely recognized (Schuett et al. 2001, Cestero 1999, Dukes and Firehock 2001, Emerson and Nabatchi 2015) , although not without some important criticisms (Poncelet 2001, McCloskey 2000, Dukes and Firehock 2001, Conley and Moote 2003). The Puget Sound experience is no exception to this trend – with collaborative processes integrated into numerous environmental initiatives (Shared Strategy Development Committee 2007, PSP 2016).

While many definitions of collaborative approaches to environmental issues have been proposed (Conley & Moote 2003, Ansell & Gash 2008, Heikkila & Gerlak 2005, Dukes and Firehock 2001) this paper primarily utilizes the Cestero (1999) definition of a collaborative conservation initiative as “a cooperative process in which interested parties work face-to-face to resolve a natural resource problem, create a new policy, or develop a management plan. [...] A ‘collaborative conservation initiative’ brings together people from across the spectrum of diverse [...] perspectives regarding conservation and natural resource issues.” (Cestero 1999:9). This paper refers to “collaborative restoration” (as opposed to “conservation”) to more accurately capture the specific context. Although tribal co-management of fisheries and hatcheries in Washington can be thought of as a type of collaboration, there is a clear distinction between the treaty-guaranteed role of the tribes and that of individuals, cities, or local groups (Singleton 2009). The author recognizes this crucial distinction and proposes that, in the Qwuloolt case, the role of Tulalip Tribes, while distinct from other participants, was broader in scope than merely

co-management. Their participation is more reflective of the resolution of natural resource problems indicated in the above definition.

The designation of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) the Washington Department of Ecology (WDOE), and the Tulalip Tribes as Natural Resource Trustees of the Qwuloolt site represents an institutional obligation to cooperate and coordinate on an environmental issue (EPA 2017). More informally, the project exemplifies a diversity of perspectives described in the working definition; the Tribe, state and federal agencies, nonprofits, local government, and individual landowners and farmers, working together on estuary restoration. Tulalip Tribes acts in a leadership role as project manager, and defines the project as “collaborative” (Tulalip Tribes 2016).

III. Methods:

This research project utilized semi-structured key informant interviews (Edwards & Holland 2013; Tuler et al. 2002). All interviewees were involved in the Qwuloolt Estuary Project and selected in partnership with Tulalip leadership to be representative of the different parties involved in the project (see Table 2). A relatively large number of tribal staff members was interviewed to capture the perspectives and roles of tribal leadership, the overall goal of the research project. The interviews typically lasted 1-2 hours and were mostly conducted in person. Individual interviewees are given a number (1-13) for this paper and enrolled members of the Tulalip Tribes are further distinguished by a “t” (i.e. Tulalip Tribes (2t) 2016).

Table 2. Breakdown of interviewee categories

Primary Role/Agency	Number of Interviews
Tulalip Tribes staff members	8
Washington State Agency Staff	2
County Collaborative Floodplain Group & Agriculture	2
Non-profit Organizations	1

The selection of a semi-structured interview methodology was informed by the recognition that interviewees have a deep, rich knowledge on the topic, and the desire to preserve the voices of the those interviewed. The research team utilized an interview guide, but approached the interviews as an iterative and context-dependent interaction (Whitesell et al. 2007), which allowed for exploration of ideas that interviewees indicated were most important. Due to the small number of interviewees as well as individuals involved in the Qwuloolt project in general, no statistical or quantitative analysis is appropriate or attempted.

The interviews were transcribed and then coded in their entirety using Atlas.ti software V.1.0.48. Codes serve as a tool for organizing and attaching meaning to pieces of qualitative interview data in order to systematically analyze and process it (Miles et al. 2014, Saldaña 2015). This project used 32 codes related to the restoration process (see appendix for complete list), ranging from drivers of ecological change, to treaty rights, to social objectives of restoration. Some codes were pre-identified, while others emerged through the analysis. The coding strategy used can be categorized as primarily “values coding” with some “descriptive coding” (Saldaña 2015). “Simultaneous coding,” the attachment of multiple codes to all or parts of a single phrase or passage, was heavily utilized in the analysis. This function is particularly useful when analyzing information on complex social interactions (Saldaña 2015) or when the information is both descriptively and inferentially significant (Miles et al. 2014). Coded interviews were further

analyzed through theoretical memos (Miles et al. 2014). The factors identified below emerged as themes that interviewees identified as most important and/or were most frequently identified. This analysis also uses previous work by Cronin and Ostergren (2007), which looked at tribal participation in collaborative watershed management groups in the Southwest and Pacific Northwest, as a starting point and a framework for thinking about Tulalip Tribes' participation in the Qwuloolt project.

A final component of this research was “Navigating Coastal Squeeze Workshop” held in December 2016 and co-hosted by the Tulalip Tribes and the UW School of Marine and Environmental Affairs. The workshop brought together over 70 environmental leaders, practitioners, and tribal members in the Puget Sound and served as a means to validate initial conclusions of the interviews (Corbin & Strauss 2015). It explored needs and priorities for large-scale estuary restoration in a time of increasing environmental pressure in the region. The workshop included small group discussions on preliminary themes identified by this research, including collaborative approaches to restoration. The results of these discussion sessions inform the analysis and recommendations.

IV. Key Actions and Actors in the Qwuloolt Case:

The Qwuloolt Project is a 400-acre estuary located along Ebey Slough, within the City of Marysville in Snohomish County (Map 1). It was conducted under leadership of the Natural Resource Trustees; NOAA, WDOE, USFWS, and the Tulalip Tribes (Tulalip Tribes 2013), in partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers, Natural Resources Conservation Service, non-profit organizations, the City of Marysville and a number of individual landowner/farmers. The Tulalip Tribes is a federally recognized Indian tribe, comprising the descendants of the

Snohomish, Snoqualmie, Skagit, Suiattle, Samish and Stillaguamish Tribes (Tulalip Tribes 2016). They continue to inhabit the Snohomish River Basin and estuary and rely, both for subsistence and commercially, on the natural resources of the sea, estuary, and forests of the region (Tulalip Tribes 2013). The Tulalip Indian Reservation is approximately 22,000 acres and located west of the City of Marysville (Tulalip Tribes 2013). The tribe’s approximately 4,200 members (2,600 of which live within the reservation) are governed under the leadership of the Tulalip Board of Directors (Tulalip Tribes 2013).

Map 1: Locating the Qwuloolt Project and Landfill Site



(Tulalip Tribes 2016 – Landfill site, old southern levee (red) and new western levee (purple) added by author)

What is now Qwuloolt (“marsh” in Lushootseed, the traditional language of Tulalip Tribes) was an early site of Euro-American settlement and by 1938 the estuary had been completely cleared of the original forest and converted to farmland by construction of a series of levees. The project began as a habitat mitigation project to offset the damages done by the Tulalip Landfill, run by Seattle Disposal Company under lease from the Tribe, which was ultimately designated a Superfund site. The Qwuloolt project was selected by the Natural Resource Trustees as having the highest potential for recovering lost wetland areas, mitigating damage caused by the landfill (Tulalip Tribes 2016). Major elements of the restoration included the construction of a levee on the Western edge of the project site to protect existing infrastructure, and the breaching of an old levee on the Southern edge of the site which was initially constructed to improve and protect agricultural land by separating it from the greater Snohomish Estuary (See table 3). In total, the Qwuloolt project took over 20 years and cost over \$20 million dollars to complete (Tulalip Tribes 2016). In 2015, the Southern levee at Qwuloolt was breached, completing the initial active restoration process (Tulalip Tribes 2016). Collaborative monitoring of the site continues today (Tulalip Tribes 2016).

Table 3: Qwuloolt Timeline

Year	Activities
Settlement - 1938	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Estuary completely cleared of original forest• Converted to farmland through series of levees
1983-1964	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agricultural development continues
1964-1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seattle Disposal Company Landfill in operation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accumulates four million tons commercial and industrial waste • Landfill fills in 147 acres of estuary • Waste improperly stored, leaches toxins into estuary
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Resource Trustee Council formed to assess damages from landfill site and generate restoration options
1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tulalip Landfill designated a Superfund Site by EPA
1997	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qwuloolt project selected as best option for recovering lost wetlands and mitigating landfill damage
1994-2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qwuloolt Project scoping
2008-2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and permitting
1994-2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property acquisitions and easements secured
2008-2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1: Structural elements including: stream restoration, topographic restoration, native vegetation planting, structure demolition, garbage removal
2013-2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2: Process elements including: setback levee construction (Western edge levee) and levee breaching (Southern edge levee)
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southern levee breached
2015-present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing collaborative monitoring

In many ways, Qwuloolt is representative of the challenges and opportunities of restoration in the Puget Sound. While it is largely considered a success (ecologically and in terms of partnerships) by those who worked on it, there is a recognition that its slow pace and long timeline cannot become the norm if salmon and estuary recovery targets are to be reached. Understanding what motivated the Tulalip Tribes to participate in this collaborative restoration effort can provide insight for similar projects attempting to effectively engage tribal partners, improve collaboration, and reduce the overall duration and cost of restoration in order to meet regional goals.

V. Results and Discussion:

The following six factors emerged through analysis of the interviews as significant in motivating and sustaining Tulalip Tribes' participation in Qwuloolt, a large-scale collaborative restoration project.

1. Maintain and strengthen value of treaty rights by improving environmental quality:

Interviewees highlighted the crucial importance of treaty rights and their interconnectedness with habitat and resources. One interviewee commented: *"We share a lot about the treaties. [...] Everything that we have stems from the treaty; our businesses, our sovereignty, [...] our right to access the salmon, and our right to a way of life."* (Tulalip Tribes (6t) 2016). Continued threats to the habitat and resources of the region therefore also threaten the value of treaty rights (TITWW 2011). Although recent court cases have affirmed the rights and obligations associated with treaty rights, they continue to be threatened by habitat loss, declining salmon runs, and unequal regulation by state and federal agencies (TITWW 2011) as well as failure on the part of governmental agencies to fully appreciate the role of the tribes (Singleton 2009). Other approaches to coastal resource conservation and management in the Puget Sound, may have been less successful at motivating tribal engagement and acceptance because they fail to uphold and strengthen treaty rights. Marine protected areas (MPAs) for example, were viewed as problematic by local tribes because they restricted place-based fishing, disproportionately disadvantaging tribal fishermen, failed to address underlying pollution and habitat concerns, and did not adequately satisfy tribal co-management rights (Singleton 2009, NWIFC 2003).

Restoration is viewed as a way to protect and restore the resources upon which the value of treaty rights is predicated: *"We have heard from like our elders - like Billy Frank and all of the people – that they seen this coming. That there'd be a time when these fish are going to start to*

disappear. And Billy Frank's always said the environment is our next challenge. It might be the battleground. [...] But without these resources, our treaties are going to disappear.” (Tulalip Tribes (6t) 2016). Furthermore, the process of large-scale collaborative restoration is seen as qualitatively different in its respect for treaty rights: *“Today it's different. We are recognized with jurisdiction. We are recognized with the authorities. We're proposing a lot of these projects now and implementing them. Like the Qwuloolt. The Qwuloolt was definitely different.”* (Tulalip Tribes (7t) 2016). External collaborators on the Qwuloolt project also echoed this perspective: *“The Tribes are absolutely critical players at the table. For us to try to do much without Tribal support would be a fool's errand. [...] They have treaty rights that supersede laws and other requirements.”* (County Floodplain Member (4) 2016). Thus the tribe’s participation in Qwuloolt was motivated by both the understanding that their treaty rights would be respected by the collaborative process, and the opportunity to improve the habitat and resources which underlie these rights.

2. Imminent threat to culturally significant resources:

Tribal cultural connection to aquatic resources has been proposed as a significant factor in motivating participation in collaborative projects (Cronin and Ostergren 2007). The cultural and economic importance of salmon to tribes of the Pacific Northwest has been documented (Amberson et al. 2016, Lynn et al. 2013, Donatuto et al. 2014) and Tulalip interviewees emphatically echoed this: *“Salmon is what our community depends on. It's part of our culture, It's part of our culture, not only for income, but it's really a key cornerstone of our culture”* (Tulalip Tribes (2t) 2016). Moreover, the Tulalip Tribes consider themselves *“a fishing people”* (Tulalip Tribes (6t) 2016), with salmon being crucial to that identity. The importance of salmon

was also expressed in terms of cultural resources and identity: *“The relationship that she has [a tribal elder] to salmon, on an everyday level - just consuming salmon - but on another level [...] as a signifier of being a Coast Salish person with this very fragile, textured, and long, tradition of being in the world”* (Tulalip Tribes (9) 2016). Salmon is a “signifier” of cultural identity for many people in the Tribe. Therefore, restoring salmon habitat not only protects an important food resource, it also protects a vital link to cultural history and identity.

However, this research demonstrates that the real and imminent threat of losing this cultural keystone species contributes significantly to the Tulalip Tribes’ motivation to participate in this collaborative restoration project. The “perceived crisis” of important natural resources has been shown to be a motivating force in successful collaborative environmental initiatives (Pollnac 2001, Pinkerton 1989). Salmon runs in Washington have continued to decline and are threatened by dams, pollution, overharvest, and habitat loss (Hamel et al. 2015). Tribal members are aware of this decline both scientifically and experientially. *“Because we used to fish, there used to be thousands of chinook available to us. [...] We haven't seen them start to take again. [...] The conditions are just not there for them up in the rivers anymore.”* (Tulalip Tribes (6t) 2016). Members of the Tulalip Tribes, particularly elders, are viscerally aware of this reality and a number of our interviewees expressed a sense of urgency around the need for increasing restoration efforts to protect salmon and their habitat. *“Up until the last salmon, you fight. You can't imagine what it means for some of the tribal population to be without salmon. It's just apocalyptic on some level. [...] It's just fundamentally scary to imagine what that does to certain members of the tribe who have to think of a time, a future without salmon. To have to have their salmon ceremony and use Alaskan salmon because there is no local [salmon]. That's just heartbreaking.”* (Tulalip Tribes (9) 2016). The salmon runs that neighboring tribes depend on

are drastically reduced, to the point that they hardly have enough for their salmon ceremonies. The fear of collapse of local salmon runs is unfathomable for many people within this community and drives tribal participation in restoration work. Qwuloolt is seen as “*a very important project for providing for the resources that [the tribe] needs culturally*” (Tulalip Tribes (8) 2016). The crisis of declining salmon runs, a cultural keystone species, and the potential to change that trajectory through restoration, motivated Tulalip Tribes to participate in Qwuloolt.

3. *Concern for Future Generations:*

Tulalip interviewees expressed a responsibility to future generations as a motivating factor for engaging in the Qwuloolt project. The “seven generations” perspective or a responsibility to future generations through sustainable stewardship of land is common in many Indigenous communities (Wood and Welcker 2008, Turner and Clifton 2009, Johnsen 2010). Concern for future generations was often expressed in terms of a continued ability to engage in cultural practices involving salmon. One interviewee expressed: “*Even now I think about my grandchildren and my boys, and I'm like, 'Boy, that opportunity [to fish] just isn't there for them like it was for me.'*” (Tulalip Tribes (6t) 2016). Interviewees directly link engagement and success in restoration with protecting resources for future generations: “*we're not gonna rebuild the salmon runs with just one Qwuloolt, but maybe we save enough to where my grandchildren or great grandchildren are able to harvest some salmon. You know that's the main objective: protecting it for the future generations*” (Tulalip Tribes (2t) 2016). The understanding that restoration work can contribute positively, if incrementally, to future generations motivates engagement in and commitment to large-scale collaborative restoration in the region.

In addition to contributing to the preservation of cultural resources for future generations, the Qwuloolt project engaged younger (and eventually future) generations in cultural and environmental issues. While perhaps not an initial motivating factor, the potential for restoration projects to involve youth and provide learning opportunities for future generations emerged as a strong motivating factor during the Qwuloolt project. One interviewee commented: *“The potential for this project to help the Tulalip Tribes is great in the sense that, if they take advantage of it, there's a whole generation of school kids who have an opportunity to see an entire ecology transform and be little scientists out there on the ground [...] You have a whole generation of kids who'll grow up thinking about the story of the Coast Salish and how they used this land 300 years ago and really learning about the tribe and resources”* (Tulalip Tribes (9) 2016). While one side of “concern for future generations” is a fear of cultural loss, participation in large-scale collaborative restoration provides the tribe with opportunities to teach, to engage, and to share knowledge with younger generations. Concern for future generations was reflected in the Navigating Coastal Squeeze Workshop as well. Tribal and non-tribal participants alike emphasized the need to engage and mentor younger generations in environmental leadership to ensure that restoration work is supported and continued into the future. A chief motivation of the Tulalip Tribes to engage in the Qwuloolt project was a concern for future generations and recognition of the opportunity to contribute to them both by proactively protecting their resources and actively engage with them now.

4. Cultural Commitment to Place in Perpetuity:

The inherent place-based nature of restoration takes on an additional layer of meaning when Indigenous people, for whom place has natural, cultural, subsistence, and economic value are

involved in planning (Stumpff 2006). Thus a commitment to place-based restoration is also a commitment to identity, language, homeland, and future generations (Kimmerer 2011, Nabhan et al. 2016). Qwuloolt interviewees commonly described the scope and importance of restoration and salmon recovery in terms of sense of place and commitment to place. One interviewee framed the importance the Qwuloolt restoration in terms of these long time-term horizons: *“The Tribe is here to stay and our people have been here for 1000s of years. We don’t plan on moving anywhere”* (Tulalip Tribes (3t) 2016). Cultural commitment to place as a motivating and sustaining factor in collaborative large-scale restoration emerged as a distinct theme of the interview data. One interviewee stated: *“I think they have cultural interest in this far deeper than anybody else has. They’re not like the federal government who can do these things and go away. [the tribe is] here. So they’re more closely connected to the environment that surrounds them.”* (Tulalip Tribes (8) 2016). Restoration is inherently place-based and these interviews suggest that a commitment to place is a significant, separate motivator.

One interviewee told us the story of the first salmon run. This story highlights cultural commitment to place and resources on a grand time scale. The interviewee recounts that the people of today’s Tulalip Tribes were in the Puget Sound prior to the melting of the glaciers:

“[The University of Washington] found evidence of the glaciers as they melted back and receded over time. The river started settling down to where it had the gravels that the fish could use. But prior to that occurring, they found evidence of our people being here already. [...] As the glaciers were melting, they were there to watch the forest grow. They were there to see the first fish come in. And they had a relationship by then with the land, [...] They saw the importance of that first salmon

coming in. [...] They were already here. And I imagine it was a real time of celebration for them. And for our ancestors.” (Tulalip Tribes (7t) 2016).

The permanence of the Tulalip Tribes in this space and in connection with these resources is clear. Their commitment goes beyond individual resources; it is a commitment to remaining in ancestral lands and maintaining relationships with the land that has supported their people for generations. The concept of permanence in geographic space permeated the interviews. Different interviewees used similar language in talking about the permanence of the tribe: *“Some of our members are kind of spread out coast to coast but the vast majority of our membership live right here and maintaining our homeland is what is important to us. We’re not planning on going anywhere”* (Tulalip Tribes (3t) 2016). Cultural commitment to place, to homeland, in perpetuity is an important motivating factor in tribal participation in collaborative large-scale restoration projects.

5. Tribal Leadership Supports the Project:

The vision and leadership of the Tulalip Tribes in the collaborative restoration process was considered essential by many interviewees: *“Let’s just put it this way, I have my doubts that it would have been completed by somebody else”* (Tulalip Tribes (8) 2016). Strong and committed leadership is widely recognized a significant factor in collaborative environmental projects (Guitierrez et al. 2011, Pietri et al. 2009, Cronin and Ostergren 2007). Although the collaborative leadership of the Qwuloolt project was often leveraged, interviewees pointed to the internal Tulalip leadership as motivating and sustaining their participation. In particular, the Tulalip Tribes Board of Directors, which provided guidance, emergency funding, and acted as a liaison

between the Tribe and leadership of others involved in the collaboration was viewed as key: *“From a policy, political perspective, the [Tribal] Board was very, very helpful in getting the project done”* (Tulalip Tribes (8) 2016). Leadership and support from the tribe’s Department of Natural Resources was also identified as important: *“without Tulalip leadership, especially [the Project Leads], that project would have never been built. Most people would have dropped it years ago”* (Tulalip Tribes (3t) 2016). The existence of strong leadership that supported the project made the tribe’s participation possible.

The support of the internal leadership was concretely manifested as dedicated resources and staff time. Tulalip Tribes was able to prioritize resources for the restoration project: *“The tribe just stepped up and spent the money that was needed to cover the shortfalls. So the tribe besides our time and effort also put a fair amount of cash into the project to help get it done”* (Tulalip Tribes (3) 2016). Financial resources and capacity are also recognized as significant to successful collaborative environmental work (Cronin and Ostergren 2007, Gill et al. 2017). The commitment to participation in large-scale restoration is further evidenced by the fact that Tulalip leadership continued to support the project, both politically and financially, even when it became clear that an appropriate funding structure was lacking.

“Most programs were funding [...] small 400-foot restoration projects that you might spend \$100,000 on. And there really weren't any funding sources that can bring to bear the costs of doing these large restoration projects. But it is very important. There need to be larger funding sources for these larger restoration projects. I think these are the type, the size of the project [where] you're going to see benefits, more so than all the small ones.” (Tulalip Tribes (8) 2016).

In response to this challenge, instead of giving up, the Tulalip Tribes and their collaborators began working on “*changing how the state manages funding for these large projects. We don’t want it to take 20 years to raise funding for another large project*” (Tulalip Tribes (3t) 2016), further demonstrating the ongoing support from tribal leadership for this type of project. A willingness from Tulalip leadership to commit resources, staff, time, and money, to a long-term – in this case 20+ years – collaborative restoration is an important factor in their overall participation.

6. *Willingness to Build Relationships and Identify Common Ground with Relevant Non-Tribal Communities:*

In the Qwuloolt project, Tulalip Tribes faced a continuing legacy of social tension, particularly with the adjacent landowners and the neighboring community of Marysville. One state agency staff member who was highly involved in Qwuloolt commented: “*there's a lot of history here between the tribe and the city, the economic engine that the tribe is developing is affecting the city and [...] there's also just some social tensions*” (Department of Ecology (5) 2016). Another interviewee commented “*There are people who just don't like working with tribes for one reason or another. Some of ‘em really did not like the Boldt decision or still don't like it. It's been over 40 years and people are still complaining*” (Tulalip Tribes (3t) 2016). This tension was a particular obstacle for the Qwuloolt Project when it came to acquiring land for restoration. While the tribe was able to draw on their collaborators to overcome this challenge, they have also been deliberate about relationship-building with non-tribal communities prior to this project. Previous efforts were described as, “*a beautiful example - early example - of farmer*

and Tribes working together.” (County Floodplain Group Member (4) 2016). This allowed them to begin to overcome the obstacle of social tension to work collaboratively on the Qwuloolt project with multiple stakeholders.

This research suggests that a willingness to identify common ground with these communities contributed to Tulalip Tribes’ continued participation in Qwuloolt. Alternative Dispute Resolution, a precursor to collaborative approaches to environmental management, proposes that there is undiscovered common ground among different groups which, once identified, can contribute to collaborative solutions (Singleton 2002). Furthermore, due to the increasingly complex multi-stakeholder nature of the coastal and estuarine zones, an ability to identify common ground is essential to ongoing restoration work in the region. The Navigating Coastal Squeeze Workshop validated this finding. Workshop participants highlighted the need to identify common goals for the region, and build trust, relationships, and dialogue among the diversity of communities involved in restoration activities, particularly between tribes, agriculture, and agencies.

Interviewees identified a number of ways in which the Tulalip Tribes have found “common ground” with other communities – particularly those where social tensions exist. These include a “seven generations” perspective and concern for future generations, a reliance on healthy land for food production, common threat from unchecked urbanization and development, and a shared appreciation for salmon. The search for common ground particularly involved relationships between the agricultural and restoration communities around Qwuloolt, but also more broadly. One interviewee commented:

“these are communities that have had a history of conflict often. But there are many common principles and values between those two communities. They’re both looking [forward] seven generations [...] They are also both food producers. So there are a lot of similarities. And we’ve seen a bridging and a coming together and building of trust between leaders in the tribal community, as well as in the agricultural communities”
(County Floodplain Group Member (4) 2016).

The willingness of the tribe to look for commonalities with the agricultural community, rather than being distracted by differences is essential to their sustained participation in this collaborative project.

VI. Conclusions & Recommendations:

The motivations for Tulalip Tribes’ participation in the large-scale and collaborative Qwuloolt Estuary Restoration Project are complex and multi-faceted. These six factors provide insight into these motivations and suggest that they are likely to participate in similar projects in the future. Understanding how and why treaty tribes choose to participate in collaborative restoration can contribute to accelerating the pace and increasing the efficacy and longevity of desperately needed large-scale collaborative restoration in the region. Based on analysis of the Qwuloolt interviews and the priorities identified at the Navigating Coastal Squeeze Workshop, I have identified five recommendations for large-scale collaborative restoration projects that would engage tribal participation:

- *Ensure that restoration projects include robust monitoring programs:* This analysis

highlighted the fact that concern for future generations is a strong motivating factor for the tribes. Interviewees also suggested that a long-term or “seven generations” perspective exists in both tribal and agricultural communities. Monitoring social and ecological elements will allow the results of restoration projects, which can be slow to physically appear, to be recorded and their impact demonstrated. Particularly for tribal partners, who are committed to their ancestral lands in perpetuity, recording the effects of successful restoration projects is meaningful and contributes to fulfilling intergenerational responsibility. Monitoring both social and ecological outcomes aligns with the motives that underpin tribal commitment to such restoration efforts and is in line with state-of-the-art monitoring methods (Bennett et al 2017).

- *Work with tribal partners to identify and prioritize design of large-scale collaborative restoration projects:* Understanding the motivations and priorities of tribal partners is key to successful restoration. This analysis suggests tribal participation is motivated by an array of potential restoration benefits (salmon recovery, restoration of important places, preservation of opportunities for future generations). However, tribes are unique and their needs and priorities vary. Restoration practitioners interested in successfully engaging tribal participation should work with relevant tribes to identify and prioritize ways that restoration projects can meet tribal needs.
- *Approach treaty rights with respect:* Treaty rights preserve tribal access to spaces and resources that are inherently linked to cultural practices, homeland, and identity. An approach to collaborative restoration that engages tribal partners as leaders and experts, includes meaningful and ongoing co-management, and is respectful of the responsibilities treaty rights confer is needed. Although treaty rights continue to be threatened, this

analysis demonstrates that external enforcement of and respect for treaty rights contributes to maintaining tribal participation in collaborative restoration.

- *Document, share, and celebrate cases of successful collaboration between tribal and non-tribal communities:* Relationships between tribal and non-tribal communities continue to be affected by a history of colonialism and antagonism, yet building these relationships is essential to doing large-scale restoration in the increasingly complex coastal and estuarine zones of the Puget Sound. Research documenting instances of successful collaboration between these groups can help inform ongoing restoration work.
- *Continue work to identify coordinated funding for large-scale collaborative restoration projects:* The lack of funding structure for large-scale restoration continues to slow timelines and, in the case of Qwuloolt, place a burden of funding on tribal leadership. The ecological benefits of large-scale restoration are significant yet these projects are constrained by funding. Tribes and other collaborators will be more willing to participate if existing funding structures support this work.

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