

Link to Sustaining Our Culture Workshop Press Release, October 2011

<http://nwifc.org/2011/10/tribes-land-managers-discuss-sustainability-of-traditional-plants/>

Tribes, land managers discuss sustainability of traditional plants

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[The Tulalip Tribes](#) held a workshop about gathering traditional plants on public lands.

Press release:

Representatives from numerous Washington Tribes, and Officials from the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the State of Washington Department of Natural Resources and other agencies wrapped up two days of initial discussions that the Tribes hope will lead to greater focus on the management of plants vital to Pacific Northwest tribal cultures.

“Contrary to what many may think the Northwest was not an untouched wilderness before white explorers and traders arrived here; instead, it was home to the Tribes for the last ten thousand years. Our ancestors figured out long ago a way to treat the lands with respect, with a kind of stewardship that sustained and enhanced the plants and animals they needed,” said Ray Fryberg, Director of the Tulalip Tribes Natural Resources Department.

Northwest Tribes encouraged public land managers to work together with the Tribes to support a diverse and healthy landscape. “With significant population growth still projected for the Northwest—and a rapidly changing climate—we need to act now to promote a more diverse and resilient environment, upon which all of us depend, not just the Tribes,” said Terry Williams, Commissioner of Fisheries for the Tulalip Tribes.

The Tribes communicated to public land managers that for many Western Washington Treaty tribes the reservation land base cannot, by itself, furnish foods, medicines, materials and certain physical landscapes to sustain tribal cultures. Historically, these resources were gathered and traded by the Tribes over a very large area, from the high mountains to the coastal waters. Tribal leaders expressed their hope that the Tribes and public land managers would work together to ensure sustainability and access to these treaty reserved resources—which are needed to perpetuate tribal culture for future generations.

These early discussions were part of a two day inter-Tribal and government dialogue on sustaining healthy populations of traditional plants on public lands, which was hosted at the Tulalip Tribe’s new Hibulb Cultural Center and Natural History Preserve, a facility dedicated to revive, restore, protect, and interpret the history and traditional cultural values and spiritual beliefs of the Tulalip Tribes.

“For thousands of years, the Tribes’ nurtured the landscapes they were dependent upon for their health and survival. That included land-management practices to maintain a diversity of plant and animal populations, like burning for wildlife forage, and pruning or burning for huckleberry. Grasses and other plants were gathered and harvested according to our traditional harvesting methods that ensured the health of plant populations. We must have the ability to hand down this traditional knowledge to our young if our culture is to survive, and in order to do that we need a healthy and productive environment,” said Hank Gobin, Director of the Hibulb Cultural Center and Natural History Preserve.

Many at the conference believed it was a good step towards more open communication between the Tribes and public land managers. “It was an important time to hold this workshop, bringing the many tribal people who are involved and interested in this topic together with the public land managers, who may not be fully aware of the importance of plant resources to regional tribes on lands they are managing,” said Libby Halpin Nelson, Conference Coordinator for the Tulalip Tribes Treaty Rights Office. Following the initial discussion and planning which emerged from the conference, tribal conference officials will continue to encourage dialog and collaboration between the Tribes and public land managing agencies, in order to nurture the richness and wise management of the region’s public lands.

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