



Chehalis Opens Salmon Sport Fishing Trail



Chehalis Indian Band

For Immediate Release

On October 5th the Chehalis Indian Band welcomes salmon anglers into their territory as they open up a sport fishing trail on the lower Chehalis River. *"This fishing trail was built by our members as part of an agreement between the Chehalis Band and sport fishing groups to provide angling access to the Chehalis River salmon fishery, while protecting sensitive Band lands."* Said Willie Charlie, Chief and CEO of Chehalis Indian Band. The BC Federation of Driftfishers led the project for local sport fishers. Numerous other project partners include the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Arts, BC Environment, the Fraser Salmon and Watershed's Program, the Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC, DFO and The Nature Trust.

The Chehalis Fishing Trail starts at the existing Chehalis River campsite then passes through private holdings, the leased properties of the Federal fish hatchery, lands owned by The Nature Trust of BC, and finally Chehalis Indian Reserve. The adjacent DFO Chehalis Hatchery ensures salmon are available for anglers most years, and the trail leads the angler along the rushing Chehalis River and through more than a kilometer of towering cottonwood galleries and wetlands. Much of the area is to be designated as Wilderness area in the future.

This project represents the coming-together of these various land owners in a unique effort to protect local wildlife and cultural values, while providing secure access to one of the few remaining wilderness freshwater salmon angling experiences in the Fraser Valley. The Chehalis River Fishing Trail serves as a guide to the angling public to protect these values.

"We are confident the project will be a template for future collaborations which will greatly benefit both fish stocks and the respective fisheries." Stated Rod Clapton, President of the BC Federation of Driftfishers.

See attached map and itinerary.

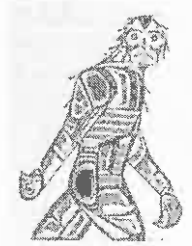
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A Chehalis 2020 Stewardship Vision for Fisheries

- A prosperous, healthy, and sustainable fishery



In 1997 the Chehalis Indian Band created a Sts'ailes Vision statement called 2020. A Chehalis Fisheries Strategy was developed by 2008 that represents a state of readiness for salmon management, stewardship and development. The fisheries Vision reflects the inherent rights of the Sts'ailes People, and embraces the capacity built over the last 30 years with an explicit investment in the watershed stewardship, community fishermen and fisheries sciences.

The Chehalis Fisheries Strategy emphasizes principles like quality, value and sustainability as the basis for managing the fishery. Governance, training, and development -work focuses capacity on achieving these Community goals. The Chehalis Fisheries Authority formed in 2004 provides a focus for Band Council authority with co-managers, and the basis for consultation with other interests. Manuals and annual work plans provide standards and policy guidance for day-to-day operations.

Organization and governance is based upon Community law and agreements with co-managers that provides a framework of legal and regulatory systems that are designed to protect the fishery and fishing rights of the Band. Governance of the Community fishery is through the Band's Chehalis Fisheries Authority and Fishers Forum. The *Sts'ailes Development Corporation*, controlled by a Board of mixed Community and independent experts, provides a business framework for fisheries operations.

Planning and consultation systems involve regulators, managers, industry and interest groups and largely focus on conservation and access. Fish science and enhancement operations include various local salmon escapement and monitoring projects.

The Band's fisheries programs, largely funded by DFO and INAC grants provide support for the Chehalis Hatchery and Weaver Creek Spawning channel, and manage the Band fisheries with Scowlitz. Research work involves both industry and academic partnerships that are looking at escapement benchmarks (Wild Salmon Policy), test fisheries and best-value studies into the varying qualities of inland salmon. Habitat conservation and restoration is focused on the lower Chehalis and Harrison River sloughs. Economic fisheries involve a Community-run surplus (ESSR) fisheries at the enhancement facilities, and a "demonstration" or experimental commercial fishery. These terminal harvests in the Harrison and adjacent Fraser River are beyond the mixed-stock fisheries downstream. A Fisheries Cooperative in its formative stage.

Key Statistics

- The Sts'ailes (or Chehalis Indian Band) are Upper Sto:lo – closest neighbor is Scowlitz Band
- Approximately 1,000 on Reserve - register more than 200 Chehalis fishers
- Fraser, Harrison and Chehalis River salmon fisheries
- Sockeye, chum, pink, coho, and Chinook span 9 months a year or more
- More than a million pounds of commercial salmon and caviars produced annually
- Employ 50 – 80 seasonal staff annually
- Building a Harrison Watershed fisheries governance system
- Chehalis led Fisheries Cooperative in formative stages with Scowlitz, other Sto:lo, and industry partners