

Project: Furthering the Makah Tribe’s response to derelict vessels, marine debris, and other threats to coastal and marine resources

Host Organization

Makah Tribe Office of Marine Affairs, 1321 Bay View Avenue, Neah Bay, WA

Mentors

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Location

The Makah Tribe is located in Neah Bay, WA. The Fellowship location is flexible between Neah Bay, Port Angeles, and Seattle. Previous Seattle-based Fellows traveled to Neah Bay at least once a month to work with staff, leadership, and community in person – a vital component of the Fellowship with the Tribe. The Makah Reservation reopened to visitors, allowing flexibility for in-person work. However, due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the opportunities for some in-person events are still uncertain. We will work with the Fellow to develop a COVID-19-safe plan for work if this remains a concern by October, 2022.

Position Description Overview

The Makah Tribal Council is a trustee of coastal and marine resources that are critically important to our culture, economy, and the well-being of our people. Primary threats to coastal and marine resources include climate change and increasing vessel traffic and oil spill risk. An additional emerging threat to these resources is derelict vessels and structures, as they can result in water pollution and habitat degradation. These risks challenge the Tribal Council’s ability to uphold its shared trust responsibilities with the federal government. In response, the Makah Tribal Council has developed an ocean policy to facilitate coordination between natural resource managers as they work to deal with ocean management issues. Additionally, the Makah Marina is expanding its derelict vessel management and removal program.

The 2022-2023 Makah Hershman Fellow will primarily support the Office of Marine Affairs’ derelict vessels management and removal program and on-going work related to vessel traffic safety, oil pollution prevention, climate resilience, and environmental policy. The Fellow will take on a flexible derelict vessels-focused primary project and other primary projects as available and interested. Through their work, the Fellow will be exposed to ocean policy, the process of government-to government consultation, and traditional ecological knowledge perspectives as part of marine planning and climate change adaptation.

Derelict vessels project

The Fellow will support the Makah Tribe’s derelict vessel removal program through a combination of the following tasks:

- Assisting the Makah Marina’s current derelict vessel management, such as tracking vessel state and developing a strategic action plan for vessel removal;
- Visiting and researching other tribal and remote marinas to compile a list of lessons learned and potential strategies for managing derelict vessels and structures;

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- Developing a policy summary of state and federal regulations pertaining to derelict vessels and structures to support future policy statements and grant proposals; and/or
- Compiling a list of funding opportunities for derelict vessel removal and supporting grant proposal writing to secure such funds.

Other primary projects could include but are not limited to

- Developing a white paper and/or mapping tool on the overlap between oil pollution risk and climate change impacts focused on identifying key species and habitats at risk;
- Identifying community-based methodologies to incorporate community input into clean-up endpoints for oil spills; and
- Assisting in developing or updating climate resilience plans including the Ocean Acidification Action Plan, Climate Resilience Plan, and recreation management strategy.

To support ongoing work the Office of Marine Affairs, the Fellow will

- Attend, track, and report out to staff on relevant regional oil spill, vessel traffic safety, and environmental forums such as the Regional Response Team, Puget Sound Harbor Safety Committee, Puget Sound Partnership Local Integrating Organization, etc.;
- Support implementation of the worklist as updated under the Memorandum of Agreement between the Tribe and the US Coast Guard;
- Assist staff in coordinating with research partners on the development of marine renewable energy feasibility projects in Neah Bay;
- Work with staff across departments to support policy development;
- Track relevant state and federal legislation and rulemaking and participate in developing comment letters, policy briefs, and information to support consultation as appropriate;
- Support engagement in regional marine planning and climate adaptation forums; and
- Collaborate with Makah Tribal staff to produce grant proposals, reports, presentations, and outreach efforts that support the above.

Networking and professional development opportunities

The Makah Tribe uniquely prepares our Fellows to lead environmental work at the state, federal, or private sector level because we provide a foundational understanding of treaty rights and how to engage with tribal sovereigns and co-managers. We support our Fellows in pursuing professional development opportunities that support their career goals and are happy to assist the Fellow in networking with our partners (examples listed below) as they are interested.

- Natural resource and fisheries agencies of tribal and First Nation governments
- Federal and state agencies including EPA, NOAA, Bureau of Indian Affairs, NOAA, Washington Department of Ecology, Puget Sound Partnership, Coast Guard
- Maritime industry, including Port of Seattle, spill response contractors, and Maritime Blue
- Regional partnerships that address ocean health and planning including the West Coast Ocean Alliance and Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
- Non-governmental organizations including The Nature Conservancy
- Academic groups including Climate Impacts Group and Washington Sea Grant