

USDA Forest Service and Tulalip Tribes Partner on Watershed Restoration

Agreement expands beaver reintroductions and watershed restoration efforts

EVERETT, WASHINGTON, UNITED STATES, September 16, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and the Tulalip Tribes of Washington signed an agreement expanding wildlife and watershed restoration projects in northwest Washington. The agreement, the first of its kind for the Forest Service, uses new authorities to expand the agency's ability to partner with tribes to conduct forest management activities.

In a virtual joint signing ceremony, Tulalip Tribes' Chairwoman Teri Gobin, Under Secretary of Agriculture Jim Hubbard, Pacific Northwest Regional Forester Glenn Casamassa, and Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie Forest Supervisor Jody Weil celebrated the agreement as model for intergovernmental collaboration to support land and water conservation.

Under the agreement, the Tulalip Tribes will receive funds for a seasonal crew for three years to capture, relocate, and monitor beavers in the South Fork Stillaguamish watershed. The restoration project focuses on reintroducing beavers and taking advantage of their natural ecosystem engineering capacity. As beaver dams play a crucial role in maintaining healthy riparian habitat and water quality, these reintroductions will help improve instream and riparian habitat and support endangered salmon, a critical treaty resource to the Tulalip and other area tribes.

The 2018 Farm Bill expanded authorities for the Forest Service, under the Department of Agriculture (USDA), to utilize the 638 authority under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 for partnering with tribes on Tribal Forest Protection Act work. Today's agreement is the first of its kind for the Forest Service and represents a model for other national forests to follow.

"Tulalip has been working collaboratively with the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest to steward our ancestral lands for quite a few years," Chairwoman Gobin said. "The beaver reintroduction effort is our first project under the Tribal Forest Protection Act. We are glad to be the first tribal nation to utilize USDA's new 638 authority in funding this project."

"This agreement reflects our commitment to strengthen partnerships and share stewardship with tribes to accomplish common objectives," Under Secretary Hubbard said. "The more we can

work together, the more successful we'll be at conserving and managing these lands for current and future generations."

The Tulalip Beaver Project has operated in the Snohomish watershed since 2014, under a Tulalip Tribe-Mt. Baker Snoqualmie National Forest memorandum of agreement. This new agreement extends the Tribes' existing Tulalip Beaver Project to a new district on the forest. View a video about the Tulalip Beaver Project here.

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