



**An Indian Reorganization Act Village
Under Act of Congress June 15th 1935**

32 Chilkat Avenue Klukwan, Alaska
HC60 Box 2207 Haines, Alaska 99827
Phone: (907) 767-5505
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The Act:

The State of Alaska designates the Chilkat River to be an “Outstanding National Resource Water.”

Findings:

1. The State of Alaska is required under federal law (Clean Water Act 33 U.S.C. §1313(d)) and federal regulation (Antidegradation 40 CFR §131.12) to adopt and implement an Antidegradation Policy (ADP) to protect the water quality and existing uses of all Alaska waters. The Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) adopted an ADP in regulation in 1997 (18 AAC 70.015.)
2. The Alaska ADP establishes that where high quality waters constitute an outstanding national resource, such as waters of national and State parks and wildlife refuges or waters of exceptional recreational or ecological significance, that water quality shall be maintained and protected. The ADEC guidance document, *Policy and Procedure – Interim Antidegradation Implementation Methods* (effective July 14th, 2010) states: “...people seeking tier 3 designations...may also pursue that goal before the state legislature...by advocating for a bill recognizing an ONRW water. To qualify as a tier 3, or "outstanding national resource" water, one of two criteria must be met. The water must either be in a national or state park or wildlife refuge or be a water with exceptional recreational or ecological significance.”
3. The Chilkat Indian Village requests the designation of the Chilkat River to be an Outstanding National Resource Water as it fulfills both State regulatory requirements: it is located (in part) within the Alaska Bald Eagle Preserve, a State park established by the State of Alaska in 1982, and, as described below, has exceptional, cultural, ecological, economic and recreational importance to the Chilkat Tlingits and the broader community of Haines, Alaska.

a. Cultural Significance

The Chilkat Indian Village of Klukwan is situated on the north bank of the Chilkat River at 22 mile on the Haines Highway. The name Chilkat means “winter storage container for wild stock salmon.” The name Klukwan is derived from two Tlingit words “tlakw” which means ancient or eternal, and “aan” which means land or village, thus Klukwan means ancient, or eternal village. Nobody knows exactly when Klukwan was founded but archaeological findings in the area have been carbon dated to 2,000 years ago.



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Our founding fathers chose this location because of its abundance of wild stock salmon and other natural resources. Those abundant resources have not only sustained our people for countless generations but it also sustains the Alaska residents that make the Chilkat and Klehini River valleys their home. Jones Hotch, Jr., the Chilkat Indian Village Tribal President, said “I want my grandchildren’s grandchildren to be able to enjoy the same wild stock salmon that we grew up on.” The Tribal President is not alone in this sentiment as a recent survey conducted indicates that 91% of villagers place high importance on our tribal lands and subsistence resources.

The Chilkat people have a proverb: “Haa xaseigu xanu haa atxaayi.” This proverb, as Klukwan Elder Joe Hotch tells it, means “our life is close by our food.” As described by Lani Hotch, this proverb has meaning on several levels: “First, the food we eat sustains us, keeps us alive. Second, the types of foods we eat will determine the quality of our life/health. Third, much of our lives are spent in pursuit and preparation of our food. Fourth, the acts of berry picking, cutting fish, and dipping hooligan, bring people together in a social way and create the lifestyle of the Native people. Even though the act of pursuing our food can sometimes put us in harm’s way where people can lose their lives, i.e., hunting or fishing accidents, our people still choose to live a subsistence lifestyle.” The message behind this proverb is that we, as humans, who live so close to our food need to take care of our collective habitat, both globally and locally, so that our food sources, as well as our people, can continue to thrive. The Chilkat and Klehini River watersheds are pristine and hold vitally important food resources and therefore should receive the highest levels of protection the state and federal governments can ascribe for those reasons.

b. Ecological Importance

The Chilkat River holds all five species of Pacific Wild Stock Salmon (Chinook, Sockeye, Coho, Chum, Pink) along with trout (Dolly Varden, Steelhead, Cutthroat) and Eulachon. Some of the birds that can be seen alongside the Chilkat River are eagles, ravens, owls, gulls, ducks, and many species of migratory birds. Animals using the Chilkat River as a watering hole and hunting ground, include bears (brown and black,) moose, coyotes, red fox, lynx, wolverine, wolves, mink, weasels, and land otters.

The Chilkat River has natural hot springs. Warm upwelling in the River within the Alaska Bald Eagle Preserve prevents portions of the River from freezing. Because of this open water during the winter, bald eagles from all over the region gather in the Preserve for months to feed on wild stock salmon. These open water areas are also used as a resting spot for other birds.



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Every spring there is a major run of Eulachon in the Chilkat River. The people of the Chilkat Valley harvest the Eulachon to eat and to produce oil used to preserve fish, meats and berries; an important part of the Chilkat Tlingits' way of life. The Chilkat Tlingits live along the banks on the Chilkat River because of the wild stock salmon, which need a healthy Chilkat River to survive.

c. Subsistence Resource

The Chilkat River is a major food provider to Chilkat Valley residents. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game issued subsistence wild stock salmon harvest permits to 553 households in 2014. A conservative multiple of 2.5 persons/household indicates more than half of the Valley's 2500 residents are fishing the local rivers for wild stock salmon. Wild Stock Salmon harvests in the area in 2014 (Chilkat and Chilkoot Rivers) tallied 9000 Sockeye, 123 Chinook, 449 Coho, 600 Pinks, and 200 Chum.

The nutrients and detritus flowing out of the Chilkat River as a result of the River's wild stock salmon runs contribute directly to the health and productivity of the Chilkat estuary and Lynn Canal, which also produces significant populations of crab, shrimp and halibut harvested by many residents throughout the year.

d. Economic Importance

The fishing industry, tourism, and "location neutral" economies of the Chilkat Valley are fundamentally dependent on the health and productivity of the Chilkat River.

The Chilkat River supported the landing of 8.7 million pounds of seafood at a value of ~\$11.5 million in 2012. The ex-vessel income by Haines Borough based-fishermen was ~\$8.5 million in 2012. More than 17% of the local population is directly involved in the commercial fishing industry as captains, crew, or seafood processors. Many more people are indirectly employed in businesses that would not exist without the local fishery, which contributed \$326,000 in raw fish tax to the Haines Borough in 2014.

The Chilkat River's wild stock salmon are directly responsible for the existence of the region's world-famous bald eagle and brown bear populations, which draw hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Chilkat Valley every year. The region's professional guiding and rafting companies also depend directly on the quality

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and reputation of the Chilkat River. According to the Haines Borough Comprehensive Plan, the Haines tourism economy accounts for 19% of all employment in Haines, and contributes 12% of the Chilkat Valley's income.

e. Recreational Use

The Chilkat River is of tremendous recreational importance for residents and visitors to Haines, and provides access to remote areas for exploration, hunting, and wilderness camping. Seasonal activities include rafting, jet boating, camping, hunting, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, skiing, snow machining, ice skating, dog sledding, bird watching, wildlife viewing and photography.

Recreational fishing by residents and visitors takes place on the Chilkat River nearly year round, with ice fishing in the winter, Dolly Varden fishing in the spring, and wild stock salmon fishing in the summer months through till November.

f. Chilkat Indian Village Constitutional Responsibilities

Chilkat Indian Village constitution states in Article V. Section 1. (1). "To protect the natural environment and resources of the Village." Therefore, the Chilkat Indian Village requests designation of the Chilkat River to be Outstanding Natural Resource Waters.