

# Introducing The Upper Snoqualmie Resilient River Corridor Management Plan



**The Upper Snoqualmie Resilient River Corridor Management Plan is an multi-purpose living document for multiple audiences, with a goal being to serve as a community knowledge source and discussion tool to support a richer cultural relationship with the Upper Snoqualmie River and promote a collective understanding of a resilient river for all.**

To develop this plan, the Snoqualmie Tribe's Environmental & Natural Resources Department engaged with the tribal community, and the community at large, using a survey and small group interviews to gather stories about how people connect to the river, and how they feel and see the changes happening to the Upper Snoqualmie River Valley. A technical team of scientists also assessed the current state of natural river and floodplain processes in the project reach, and how these processes affect water quality, water quantity, floodplain function, and in-stream aquatic habitat.

Another layer detailed in this plan assessed how the conditions and processes of the river are expected to

adjust in a changing climate. This plan reports back what was heard from the community and the results of the scientific assessment, as well as communicates to river and city managers, specifically King County and the City of Snoqualmie, that a more holistic approach is needed to respond to the constantly changing river environment, as they own and manage much of the land along the Upper Snoqualmie River.

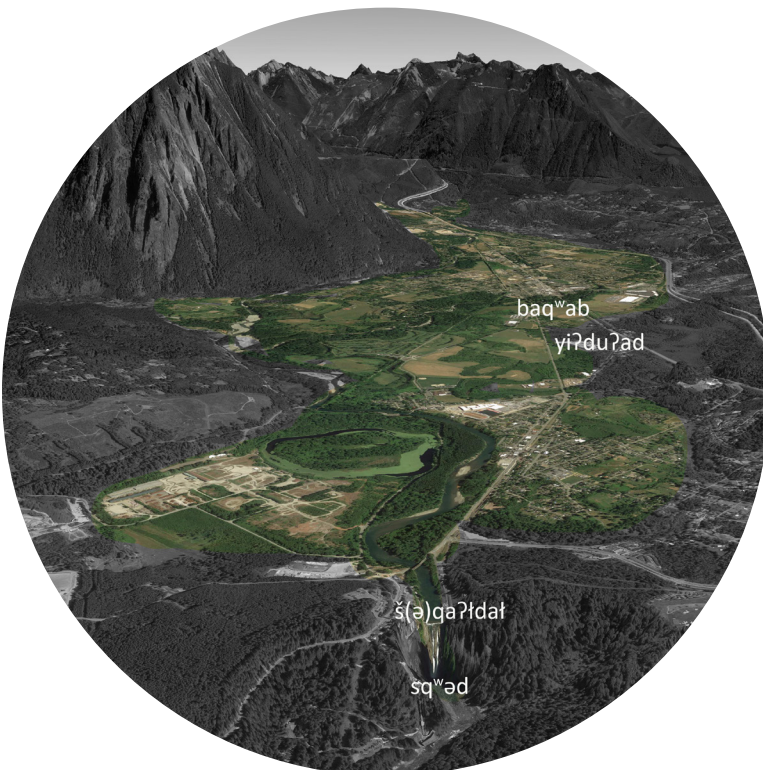
Over the last several decades, river and city managers have made decisions responding to urgent issues related to the river's effect on streamside and floodplain infrastructure. These decisions were made without the benefit of a broad, long-term vision for the Upper Snoqualmie River valley. In turn, many of these projects focused on slowing or stopping a natural river process to meet a short-term need, without full regard for the natural processes that support water quality, water quantity, and aquatic and terrestrial habitat.

The cumulative result of decision-making in the absence of a cohesive, holistic management approach for the Upper Snoqualmie River valley is the fragmented, disorganized landscape that one sees today. This plan is intended to help to fill a current gap, and to communicate a vision of what could be. It includes suggestions for where to start to take the steps needed to get to a more connected, more resilient river corridor over time.

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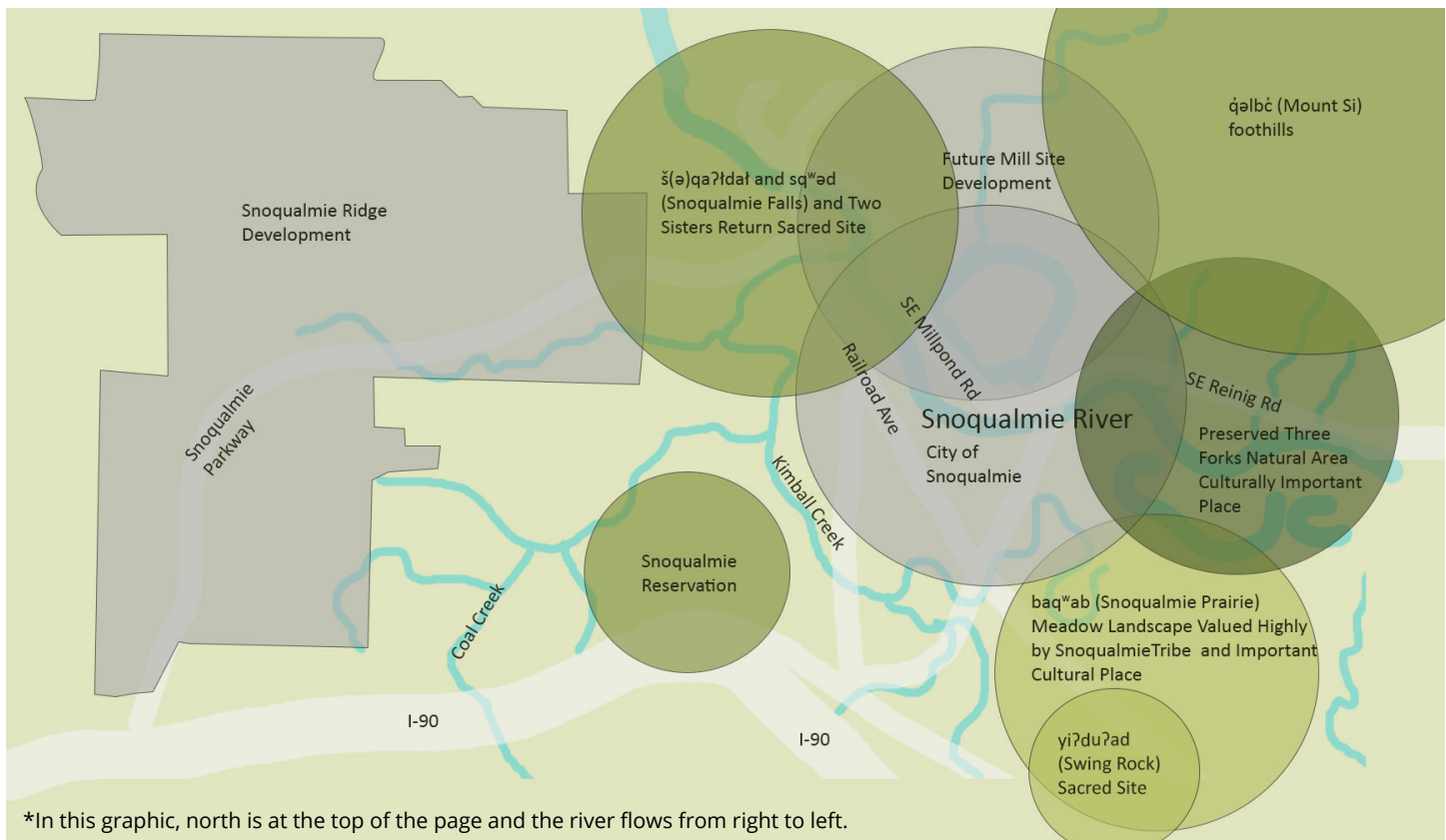
The people of the Snoqualmie Tribe are the original stewards and protectors of this land, and the Tribe knows the landscape needs attention. There is a big challenge here in the Upper Snoqualmie River corridor. There are a lot of people, many roads and highways, along with other infrastructure, and planners in the region have different visions guiding the work.

This plan continues the Tribe's work in the region, shares a resilient river vision, recommendations,



**The Upper Snoqualmie River Valley**

# The cultural landscape of the Upper Snoqualmie River Valley



**There are clear areas of overlap between sacred places and areas planned for urban growth, where good relationships and respectful land and water use management decisions will sustain the long-term health of the river and all residents of the upper Snoqualmie Valley.**

**You are invited to collaborate to support a more resilient river for all.**

and possible next steps. The results of the assessment indicate that floodplain connectivity varies throughout the Planning Area and that flood risk through the City of Snoqualmie is expected to increase under climate change conditions.

In no particular order, suggested next steps for the Upper Snoqualmie Resilient River Corridor Management Plan are:

1. Follow-up on actions identified during January 2022 County and City meetings.
2. Tribe considers prioritizing actions and figuring out plan for next steps. Priorities may vary by department.
3. Integrate and align existing city and county hazard mitigation plans, comprehensive land use plans and other planning initiatives with Resilient River Corridor Plan.
4. Continue to get the word out and refine the Plan.
5. Build community river stewardship program and begin to restore the riparian and floodplain forest

***"We are Snoqualmie. We are the Spiritual Stewards of Sacred Snoqualmie Falls. We have the duty, responsibility and honor of caring for the great gift of the Creator to the People. It is Snoqualmie Pass, Snoqualmie River, Snoqualmie National Forest, it is the greater Snoqualmie Valley and it is sacred Snoqualmie Falls. We are literally the Transformer's People. It is our history and our legacy. We pray that we honor it in our lifetimes. Without our connection remaining strong and healthy, we cannot ensure for the next seven generations, which is our teaching. Our teachers, leaders and people prayed and worked to ensure for us. We need to do the same."***

**- Snoqualmie Tribal Elder Lois Sweet Dorman**



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## Additional Information for Snoqualmie Tribal Members



### Tribal Community Access Experiences

Summarized below are experiences from tribal members and Snoqualmie Cultural Department staff and proposed recommendations for how to increase access in three areas: the Snoqualmie River, the River Valley, and Snoqualmie Falls. The Snoqualmie Tribe asserts that tribal community access is an integral part of a resilient river corridor.

### Snoqualmie River

Based on what we heard, community responses reinforce the Snoqualmie Tribe's Ancestral Lands Movement stating that, "as the Salish Sea region has grown in population, the Snoqualmie Tribe's ancestral lands have been heavily impacted by recreation." Water quality is declining, and people experience the Snoqualmie River as being full of litter and trash. The Ancestral Lands Movement will begin to address the impact of recreation on tribal lands and promoting more respectful uses. For example, the project team heard from tribal community members about the impacts experienced because of poor water quality and trash from local water sports companies in and around the Planning Area.

While the Snoqualmie River is significantly affected by decades of litter and trash, the Mill Pond (aka Borst Lake) is a known source of industrial waste pollution (Washington Department of Ecology, 2021). It is likely that addressing toxic sediment deposits, which are very close to the river, would greatly improve the health of the greater Snoqualmie River, especially if river restoration and/or climate change were to somehow re-engage Mill Pond with the river. A summary of this pollution and remediation needs, and some initial restoration opportunities are summarized in this plan.

### Snoqualmie River Valley

Stewardship and restoration of nearby, accessible locations to harvest ancestral and local foods and materials has been brought up as a desirable resilient river corridor planning action. Signage installed in these areas acknowledging the Tribal connections would combat the current erasure of the Snoqualmie Tribe's management and relationship with the river since time immemorial.

More detail is presented in the planning section at the end of this report. Many local wild foods have been observed to be decreasing in abundance and availability including salmon (sčədadxʷ), steelhead, clams, and wapato. Access to more robust and private harvest locations upstream in the Middle Fork and North Fork Snoqualmie watersheds often requires passes from the local timber companies, creating a cultural conflict between the tribal rights to clean water and food, and having to pay or negotiate with private landowners to exercise those rights.



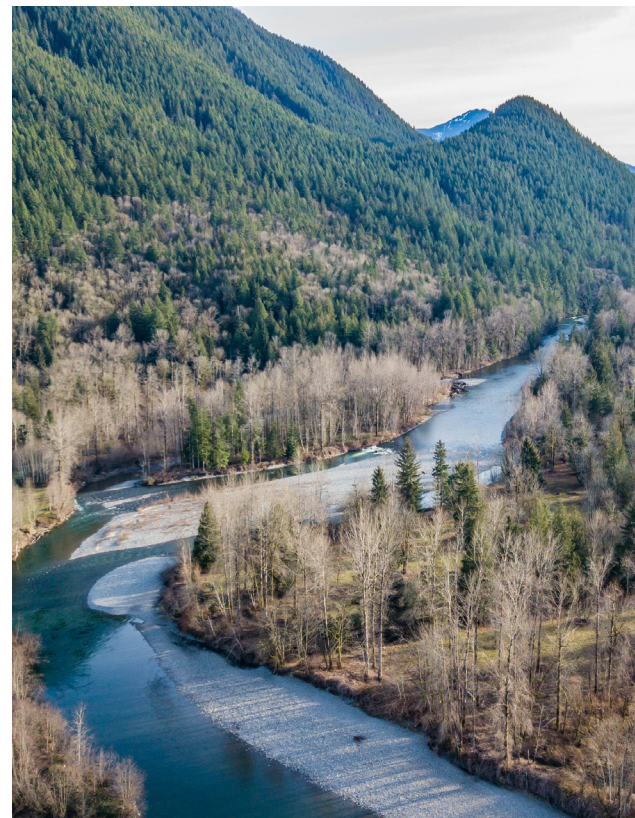
*Photo of Upper Snoqualmie River at flood stage, by M. Baerwalde. Taken 2019-10-22 at 11:57 am, looking upriver.*



A community response reflects what many commentors shared, "Anytime 'outside' growth takes place, there is a disruption in traditional access to areas that the Snoqualmie People used to go to gather medicinal plants/food/hunt. A major access blockage is/was the hydro plant."

### Snoqualmie Falls

Tribal access to the river is a challenge, and it is currently limited to public launch areas at some parks and the gated area at the bottom of Snoqualmie Falls (the Falls). The Falls are accessible by tribal members only but requires a key to access the gated area, which can be a barrier as not all tribal members may be aware of this access process. The other side of the Falls is only accessible by purchasing access to the Snoqualmie Falls Forest Theater property. Increasing access for the tribal community to the Falls is another outcome supported in this plan.



### Next steps for the Upper Snoqualmie Resilient River Corridor Management Plan

This plan is a conversation starter. The Resilient River Corridor Management Plan proposes over 20 recommendations for restoration and activities to reconnect the floodplain along the different reaches of the planning area (See the full plan available on the Tribe's website). The Tribe will continue the restoration and management activities as it always has and will lead the call for change in this important river valley.



*Photo of Snoqualmie Falls on National Day of Prayer by Ronnie Jerry Enick, Snoqualmie Tribal Member.  
Photo of wapato by M. Baerwalde. Photo of Snoqualmie River by Snoqualmie Tribe.*