

CONFEDERATED TRIBES of the CHEHALIS RESERVATION

September 30, 2026

The Chehalis Tribe maintains its longstanding position that the Chehalis Indian Reservation includes the portion of the Chehalis River at issue. The Tribe has jurisdiction within the Reservation and has the authority to regulate activities occurring within its boundaries, including these civil regulations regarding fishing.

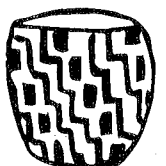
The Tribe's exercise of that authority is not a recent development, nor is it intended to create conflict with members of the public. The Tribe has sustained itself through fishing on the Chehalis River, and other waterways within its historical territory, since time immemorial. In the 1990s, a federal appellate court found the Tribe no longer has the right to fish beyond its Reservation; however, that court also unequivocally confirmed the Tribe's continued right to fish on-Reservation. As a result of this decision, the Tribe today retains fishing rights only within its Reservation – rights it values and protects. In regulating non-Indian fishers within the Reservation fishery, the Tribe is exercising its governmental authority to protect its people, its resources, and its traditional fishing practices.

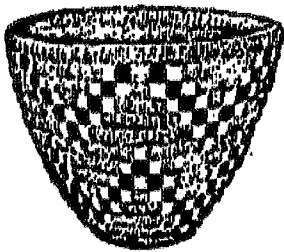
The Tribe appreciates the many non-Indian fisherpersons who have respected Tribal authority by obtaining the appropriate Tribal fishing permit or choosing to avoid the Tribe's approximately 10-mile stretch of the river within the Reservation. The overwhelming experience of the Tribe has been one of compliance and peaceful co-existence.

The Tribe is deeply concerned by WDFW's decision to issue a public statement in such a way that risks escalating tensions in this area rather than resolving the underlying jurisdictional issues through appropriate governmental channels. That approach undermines the authority of the Tribal government and, more importantly, risks creating unnecessary confrontations that could jeopardize the safety of the general public, Tribal members, law enforcement, and WDFW personnel.

The Tribe has not sought confrontation, instead it has sought to educate the public, establish clear regulatory requirements, and provide a reasonable means for non-Indian fisherpersons to comply with Tribal regulations. The fact that many individuals have done so demonstrates that the river can be shared peacefully when Tribal authority and Tribal law are respected.

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The Tribe remains willing to engage directly and professionally with WDFW, the Washington Attorney General's Office, and other appropriate governmental entities. The jurisdictional and regulatory issues should be addressed through government-to-government and legal channels, not public statements that encourage members of the public to disregard Tribal authority.

The Tribe will continue to exercise and defend its governmental authority within the Reservation. Individuals using the Chehalis River within the Reservation are expected to respect Tribal law and applicable Tribal regulations. The Tribe will continue its efforts to educate the public and enforce its civil regulatory fishing requirements in a manner that protects the safety of our people, preserves the river and its resources, and allows Tribal fisherpersons to continue practicing their traditions in peace.

Information about how to obtain a permit or to review a copy of the Tribal ordinance, visit:
<https://www.chehalis-tribe.org/departments/departments-of-natural-resources/tribal-fishing-permit/>

