



Samish Indian Nation

# Samish Resiliency Planning Project

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## Final Report

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Samish Indian Nation recognizes that climate change is indeed occurring and that even the most conservative climate projections threaten Samish members, culture, and natural resources. This report is a representation of the Samish Indian Nation's commitment to providing a bright, sustainable future for the Seventh Generation and beyond by developing an institutional understanding of how climate change may impact the Tribe, determining what is most vulnerable to future changes, and creating strategies to mitigate these impacts and protect our resources. This report is the product of over a year of collaboration between Samish Indian Nation staff and Tribal community members, led by the Samish Climate Change Working Group (hereafter referred to as Working Group). This sharing of knowledge built a list of over 200 planning areas, including infrastructure, human health, and culturally important species, all of which were evaluated in this vulnerability assessment using up to date climate projections, recent reports, and internal expertise. This vulnerability assessment is the foundation for upcoming climate adaptation planning. It will provide staff with a knowledge base that can be used to develop effective climate adaptation strategies and foster a climate resilient community. This work will help ensure that Samish People can continue utilizing the bountiful natural resources of the Salish Sea that is such an important part of the Samish cultural identity.

This document and associated web links within it represent the work and deliverables accomplished during the course of this project. It summarizes the last 2 years of effort by the Samish Tribe to understand, plan for and adapt to our changing climate and will provide planning guidance to the Tribe moving forward.

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## 2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

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Samish Indian Nation was a recipient of the FY16 BIA Tribal Resilience Program capacity building (category 9) grant. This grant laid the groundwork for future adaptation planning work to increase resilience to extreme events and harmful environmental trends. Phase 1 included outreach to Samish Tribal members, inventory of culturally important plant and animal species, and the identification of Tribal concerns related to emerging long-term weather patterns. Phase 2 of the Samish Adaptation and Resilience Initiative has been funded through a department of Energy Office of Indian Energy grant. The goal of Phase 2 was to build on the foundation of the previous Bureau of Indian Affairs funded capacity building project by hiring a Resiliency Specialist to work alongside the Samish Resiliency Working Group, complete a qualitative vulnerability and risk assessment, and develop a Samish Resiliency Plan based on community values and best available science. Phase 2 will help the Samish Indian Nation achieve resilience to extreme events and harmful environmental trends by identifying vulnerabilities, prioritizing resilience goals, and creating the Tribe's first adaptation plan. Two future continuation phases of this project are currently underway, both of which involve in-depth quantitative assessments of future impacts to resources that have been identified as vulnerable and "of concern" in Phase 2 and the development of projects to meet resiliency goals.

## 3 OBJECTIVES

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Our main objective for this project was to utilize a Samish Tribal perspective to assist in mitigation or adaptation to Tribal concerns as to how their culture and future would be impacted by Climate Change. The resulting Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan that has been developed will be integrated into the Tribe's Comprehensive Planning Process, Codified in Tribal Ordinances and serve as a guide to identify projects that will help mitigate or adapt to the changing climate and environment within Samish Traditional Territory.

## 4 ACTIVITIES PERFORMED

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The best understanding of what activities were performed under this project comes from the products that were produced. Initially, we needed to continue public outreach and education and meetings with Tribal Members, Samish Department Staff and the Climate Working Group to identify key concerns as to the effects of climate change on Samish Culture. Tribal members

were surveyed in person and via outreach to our website using the following information gathering survey located here:

Survey [https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPage.aspx?fragment=FormId%3DeLVsDzMnu0-x0NAwTqVnX6J\\_4JNpfBBJgShn4WrCdrTUREIXRkpWWVRQMjRPNk4ySIRYMIJFMk4xMi4u%26Token%3D2fea0350e8fc442588b12ab86eb48198](https://forms.office.com/Pages/DesignPage.aspx?fragment=FormId%3DeLVsDzMnu0-x0NAwTqVnX6J_4JNpfBBJgShn4WrCdrTUREIXRkpWWVRQMjRPNk4ySIRYMIJFMk4xMi4u%26Token%3D2fea0350e8fc442588b12ab86eb48198)

We found that there needed to be a lot of outreach and education efforts around climate change for Samish Members to be able to participate fully in identifying their concerns. We developed a portion of the Tribal Website to provide information to members to help them understand predicted climate change estimates and foster discussion regarding potential impacts of climate change and sea level rise. This portion of the website can be found here: <https://www.samishtribe.nsn.us/departments/environment/climate-change>

A story map was also developed which won Grand Prize for the Tribal Story Map from ESRI in 2018 and was the Story Map of the Month in July of 2018 and featured on ESRI's site. This storymap currently has over 13000 views. The Story Map can be found here: <https://samish.maps.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=a28a212bf84b4b8e9e743ee88fe3dc5b>

Several reports detailing our Climate Adaptation Planning Framework, the Climate Change State of Scientific Knowledge report and our summary of Climate Adaptation Planning Priorities were developed to guide the development of our Vulnerability Assessment/Adaptation Plan. Those foundational reports can be found here: <https://www.samishtribe.nsn.us/departments/environment/climate-change/climate-change-resources>

The information gathering effort culminated in our comprehensive Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment/Adaptation Plan. This 100 page document describes the entire process and provides all the results as well as beginning the steps of mitigation project identification. This document most completely summarizes the work accomplished to date under this project and can be found here: <https://www.samishtribe.nsn.us/departments/environment/climate-change/climate-change-resources>

## 5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The work completed under this project forms the base for Samish Climate Adaptation moving forward. We are currently working with Samish Council as they perform an overall Code update to integrate climate adaptability into the Tribal Code as appropriate. In addition, we are integrating our work into the Comprehensive Planning Process as it moves forward. Samish DNR has secured an additional year of funding to look more closely at Sea Level Rise impacts on Tribal Culture and resources and to develop a vetted project list to address adaptation strategies in the Vulnerability Assessment/Adaptation Plan moving forward and that work is currently underway. We are recommending a periodic review of best available science to determine if new climate and sea level rise estimates requires this plan to be updated as funding is available. As projects are developed and funding secured for implementation, we recommend that summary reports of those projects be linked to the Vulnerability Assessment/Adaptation Plan to show progress toward goals.

## 6 LESSONS LEARNED

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Climate Change Planning will need to be a continuous effort here at Samish. In many aspects, the future climate outlook will be decided by political and industrial practices outside of Samish control. Samish will need to continue to provide up to date climate impact analysis to tribal members and Officials so that the Tribe can assert its rights as a sovereign nation and provide mitigation strategies on behalf of its peoples. Concurrently, Samish will need to develop mitigation projects that protect the health, natural and built environments so that Samish culture can continue to thrive into the future.

The Samish Nation would like to express its gratitude to the financial support provided by the Department of Energy which has allowed us to complete this vital work on behalf of the Samish People.