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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release: Nov. 22, 2013

Tulalip Tribes establish first Native American aquatic resource program of its kind in the nation

The Tulalip Tribes will officially establish the first Native American In-Lieu Fee (ILF) program for aquatic resource impacts and compensatory mitigation in the nation Nov. 26, when they sign an ILF Program Instrument with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 10.

The purpose of the new Quil Ceda Village ILF program is to provide compensation for unavoidable impacts to wetlands and other aquatic resources resulting from construction projects within the boundaries of Quil Ceda Village. The program will use a watershed approach to locate mitigation projects and provide consolidated mitigation targeting specific priority habitat, water quality and hydrology functions based on critical needs of each sub-basin in the Quilceda Creek watershed.

An In-Lieu Fee program is an ecologically-based approach to compensate for unavoidable impacts to aquatic ecosystems caused by construction projects. The program protects and restores other aquatic ecosystems in the same watershed to replace lost ecosystem functions from construction projects. A company or permittee with a project pays a fee to the ILF program, and that funding represents the expected cost of replacing the wetland or aquatic resources lost or degraded as a result of the permittee's project. An ILF program sponsor must be a non-profit or governmental entity such as a tribe, with demonstrated competence in natural resource management.

The Quil Ceda Village ILF program will address aquatic resource and their buffer impacts within federal jurisdiction and impacts that require mitigation under the Tulalip Tribes' jurisdiction. The Tulalip Tribes anticipate selling credits from the ILF program to impact projects located within Quil Ceda Village boundaries (impact service area), while the service area for ILF mitigation projects includes the entire Quilceda Creek watershed.

The Quil Ceda Village ILF program will provide a comprehensive natural resource program that addresses ecosystem needs at the local watershed level, and that provides mitigation for lost or degraded aquatic resources and their buffers as a result of unavoidable impacts. One of the main objectives of the ILF Program is to provide high quality, successful long term mitigation using a watershed approach. The program will provide public benefit by applying mitigation resources toward the improvement of ecologically-impaired ancestral lands of The Tulalip Tribes, both on and off reservation, that have important ecological value to the watershed.

"The Quil Ceda Village In-Lieu Fee Program is for the future of the Tulalip people. It is only by protecting and restoring our tribal watershed lands, do we fulfill our obligations to future generations to leave them a healthy, productive environment, while also allowing us to develop and manage our lands to yield a stronger and even more diverse tribal economy," said Mel Sheldon, chairman of the Tulalip Tribes. "Our In-Lieu Fee program represents the first by a federally recognized tribe and we believe that our record on environmental restoration, protection, and natural resource management has prepared us to implement and administer a smart and effective program by providing high quality mitigation within a watershed approach."

"The Corps believes that effective ILF programs are vital to helping it protect the aquatic environment, efficiently administer our regulatory program, and provide the regulated public with fair, timely, and reasonable decisions," said Gail Terzi, mitigation specialist with the Army Corps of Engineers. "ILF Programs are very intentional in how they embrace a watershed approach, and as such, are optimal tools for addressing watershed needs."

"EPA commends the Tulalip Tribes for this proactive move to protect the Quil Ceda watershed," said David Allnutt, Director of the EPA Office of Ecosystems, Tribal and Public Affairs. "Watersheds and aquatic resources are a valuable part of the broader ecosystem in this area. This program will result in thoughtful decision-making to protect this tribal resource."

NOTE TO MEDIA- If you are interested in attending the signing ceremony, please contact Francesca Hillery at 360-716-4013 or fhillery@tulaliptribes-nsn.gov