

Salish Sea Ecoregions Inhabited by Coast Salish Peoples



The Salish Sea is a coastal waterway that includes the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Georgia Strait and Puget Sound, spanning from Budd Inlet in the south to Desolation Sound in the North. The complex geography in the coastal region creates several distinct ecoregions and numerous micro-ecosystems caused by natural variations including climate, exposure, vegetation and geology. Coast Salish peoples occupied the region for thousands of years and subsisted by careful management and stewardship of biological communities and resources that they depended on for food, fiber, and energy; their lifestyles were inextricably linked to their local ecosystems. Coast Salish peoples built permanent winter villages near the mouths of rivers, or in protected bays and inlets. These villages were sheltered from storms that hit the region, and were near their primary source of food, the sea. In summer, tribes left their villages for impermanent camps near inland fishing grounds. During summer other food sources and necessities were gathered from inland, even venturing in to the uplands for berries; hunting expeditions for elk, deer, and bear were also common. Coast Salish tribes also actively influenced their ecosystems by burning prairies for growing tubers and roots.