

Chilkat River | Jilkaat Heeni

Storage Container for Salmon

OVERVIEW

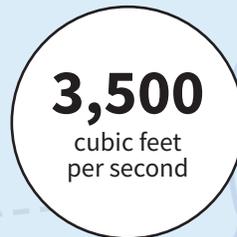
The Chilkat River, Jilkaat Heeni in Tlingit, or *Storage Container for Salmon*, provides the world's largest seasonal bald eagle gathering, Southeast Alaska's top wild coho salmon run, and home to the residents of Klukwan and Haines—communities that depend on the Chilkat River's abundant wild salmon for subsistence, economics, and our way of life. In 2016, the Chilkat | Jilkaat Heeni was nominated as a Tier 3 waterbody (the highest level of protection for waterways in the US) by the Chilkat Indian Village of Klukwan because of its enormous cultural, economic, and ecological importance.

VITAL STATS

River Length



Average Flow



Watershed Area



The headwaters of the Chilkat | Jilkaat Heeni rise from the Chilkat Glacier in BC, Canada and flow southwest to the Chilkat Inlet of Lynn Canal, just below Klukwan and Haines, Alaska. The upper watershed sits within the territories of the Carcross/Tagish, Tagish, Tutchone, Champagne, and Aishihik First Nations and the lower watershed is in Tlingit and Eyak territories. Tributaries include; the Kelsall, Kicking Horse, Klehini, Tahini, and Tsirku Rivers.

First Nations



Alaska Native Peoples



Countries



WATERSHED COMMUNITIES

KEY SPECIES



Fish Species



Mammal Species



Bird Species

The Chilkat | Jilkaat Heeni provides critical spawning habitat for all five species of Pacific salmon, anadromous eulachon and trout, but is most renowned for its coho run. The geology of the river creates a warm reservoir of ground water that freezes much later in the year than surrounding waterways. This has allowed the salmon to spawn later and longer than other places and supports the largest annual congregation of Bald Eagles. The watershed is also home to mountain goats, wolverines, wolves, brown and black bears, moose, lynx, coyotes, mink, marten, river otters, trumpeter swans, owls, hawks, geese, herons, 15 species of ducks, and over 30 species of forest and shore birds.

Canada

USA

Haines



INDUSTRIES



Fishing



Tourism



Recreation



Photography

The Chilkat | Jilkaat Heeni Watershed is used heavily for subsistence and commercial fishing, as well as for other types of food. People from around the world flock to the watershed for skiing, rafting, and other recreational activities. Each November, the Alaska Bald Eagle Festival draws photographers from near and far to witness the incredible gathering of the eagles. Other festivals and events throughout the year bring visitors to the watershed, including the Southeast Alaska State Fair and the Chilkat Triathlon.

THREATS



University
of Alaska
Timber
Sale

Proposed



Constantine
Mine

Exploration



Highway
Project

Under Construction

The Chilkat Watershed is facing the cumulative impacts of several projects. The University of Alaska Lands Dept. has proposed a timber sale of unprecedented scale on nearly ALL of their lands in the Haines area, threatening fish and wildlife habitat and water quality. Meanwhile, a multi-year highway improvement project runs alongside the Chilkat and Klehini Rivers. While most modern infrastructure projects are moving away from using riprap in favor of methods that enhance fish habitat, like woody debris, the Haines Highway project utilizes habitat-degrading riprap in numerous places. Every development project in the watershed should be considering the cumulative impacts of ALL projects.



Photo by Michele Cornelius

TAKE ACTION

Several groups have raised their voices in concern about the proposed Constantine-Palmer Mine. Resistance is building, but greater mobilization is needed to protect the Chilkat | Jilkaat Heeni River.

The proposed mine is not inevitable. We will keep you informed on upcoming opportunities to take meaningful action to protect the Chilkat Watershed. In the meantime, here are some resources to get started.

LEARN MORE

- **From SEACC:** www.seacc.org/chilkat
- **From Lynn Canal Conservation:** <http://www.lynncanalconservation.org/mining>
- **From Rivers Without Borders:** <http://riverswithoutborders.org/about-the-region/chilkat>
- **From Earth Justice:** <https://earthjustice.org/cases/2017/defending-the-chilkat-river-watershed>

GET INVOLVED

- Express your concerns to Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority at: info@mhtrust.org
- Participate in your local Fish and Game Advisory Committee
- Write to your local leaders to request action to protect the Chilkat River
- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper

SPREAD THE WORD!

www.seacc.org



Southeast_AK_Wild



Southeast Alaska
Conservation Council

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