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## Suquamish Tribe, Washington State Swap Tidelands

November 5, 2002

SUQUAMISH, Washington, November 5, 2002 (ENS) – The Suquamish Tribe today praised the Washington Board of Natural Resources' approval of a land exchange between the Suquamish Tribe, the Bainbridge Island Land Trust and the state. The deal, more than two years in the works, was approved by the state Board of Natural Resources today.

The tribe will obtain 9.4 acres of tidelands in front of its tribal center and in return, the state will receive 19.5 acres of tidelands on Bainbridge Island. This is the first tidelands exchange between the state and any tribe.

In order to get the deal done, the tribe will purchase the 19.5 acres from the Bainbridge Island Land Trust. The two properties involved in the agreement are directly across from one another at Agate Passage.

“This beach is home to us,” said Wayne George, executive director of the Suquamish Tribe. “I remember coming down to this beach when I was a boy and harvesting shellfish; oysters and clams are a very important part of

our lives. The Suquamish people have always used this beach. We need a clean place of our own where we can come and harvest. We are going to use shellfish off this beach for our use and enjoyment.”

For the Suquamish people, the land swap is historic. The deal gives the tribe something it was lacking – land that supports oysters and clams. The state gets 10 more acres of land that will have public access and be open to recreational shellfishing. The federal parcel is biologically richer than the land received by the tribe.

Neither the tribe nor the state will be allowed to build permanent structures on the beaches, and commercial activity will be limited to conventional aquaculture activities. Access to the beach in front of the tribal center will not be limited – the state receives an easement, allowing the public to traverse the tribe's newly acquired tidelands.

“Acquiring these tidelands is important to the Suquamish Tribe,” George said. “The Suquamish people have always eaten oysters and clams. And by obtaining these tidelands, we can continue to provide our tribal members with a source of clean shellfish.”