



- My name is Asha Ajmani and I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center Fellow.
- Before returning to graduate school, I was the Ecology Program Manager for the Passamaquoddy Tribe at Sipayik.
- We worked with a variety of partners on the restoration of river herring and other species of cultural significance in their Ancestral Homelands.
- I enjoyed working with Tribal Nations and community partners on sustenance fish species.



Me holding my first river herring!



- Beginning in Spring 2021, I received a contract to continue sustenance fisheries work with the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah; WTGHA)! Some of this data will be used in my dissertation.
- As the Herring Project Manager, I get to continue building relationships with Tribal communities, which I came to love in my previous position.
- The WTGHA's Natural Resources Department monitor herring and American eel movement and migration, and assess biodiversity and habitat.
- The WTGHA's hope is to restore their Tribal sustenance fisheries!



The WTGHA's Natural Resources
Department and community partners



- Thanks to the SNEC travel award, I got to attend my first National AFS meeting and give my first ever presentation as a Ph.D. student!
- The presentation focused on what my Tribal partners wanted me to convey about the importance of data sovereignty, and some of the challenges they face.
- I connected with friends and colleagues, both old and new, and felt like a part of a community.
- I was honored to take part in the Spokane Tribe's salmon release, and to be invited to experience a part of their culture.

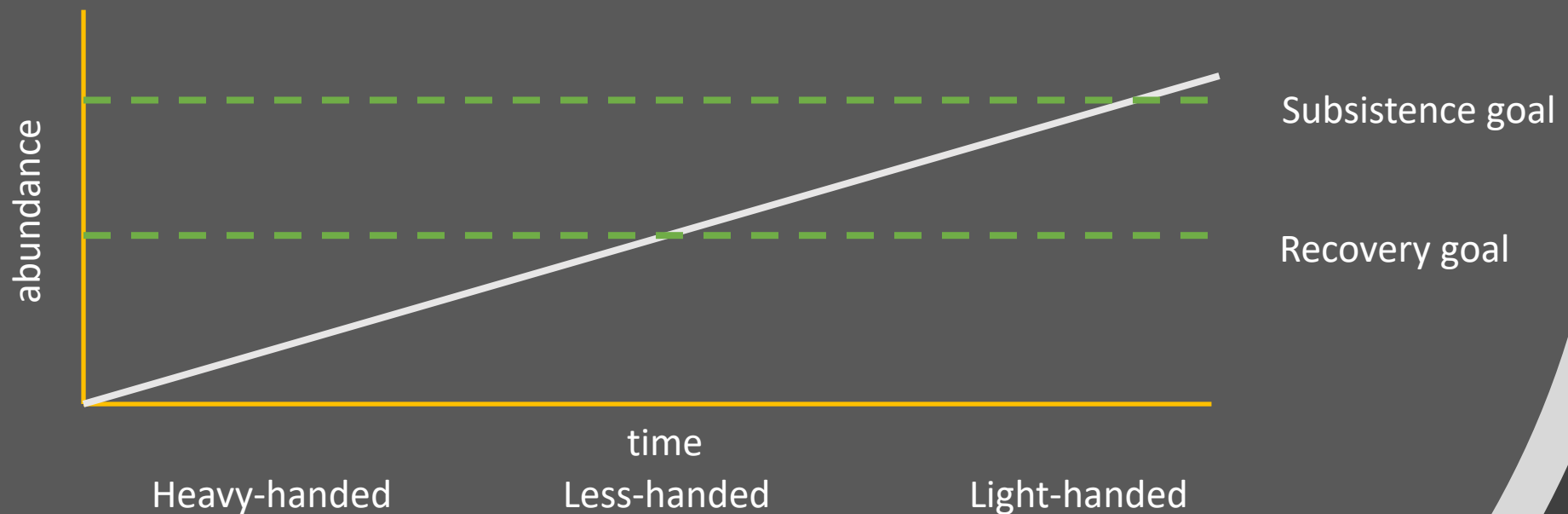


Group photo after the salmon release

Thank you for the opportunity to attend AFS 2022. I was proud to attend a conference that focused so much on the value of Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous science, and Indigenous partnerships. It is hard to work in a field where Tribal engagement is relatively new, and it is personally frustrating and isolating to be one of the few people at my university engaging in this work; my goals and the goals of the Tribal community don't often align with the standard research milestones guiding academia. It was welcoming and rewarding to participate in a conference where we were invited to be a part of culture and science that highlights the Indigenous ways of life, including deep connections to culture and nature. For the first time in a long time, I felt connected to a community that appreciates this, and I was able to network and make connections with others working with Indigenous communities.

The opportunity to engage and network with others in the fisheries community and to present to my peers was invaluable. I enjoyed attending other's presentations (I attended quite a few in Science Communication, DEIJA Communication, Hard Part Microchemistry, and Career Advancement), taking an Intro to QGIS course, and attending the Cultural Competency and Relevancy course. I also appreciated the focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Accessibility, and I found support in the community at AFS and their work to advance these efforts.

One idea that really stood out to me was the concept of Indigenous methodologies and how fish are “interrogated” throughout their whole life. From Sammy Matsaw Jr., I learned that the Wolf-Teachings promote keeping our hands off the fish. Using light-handed methods, or methods that provide more information with less handling of the fish, fits in with these teachings and helps advance more quickly towards a subsistence goal. These goals are higher than the recovery goals set by state or federal management agencies. I would like to incorporate this light-handed methodology more intentionally into my work, as it aligns with the concepts taught to me by my Tribal partners and with my own personal beliefs.



Above graph of abundance vs. time to recovery using different methodologies is based on Sammy Matsaw Jr.'s, as shared in the Cultural Competency and Relevancy workshop.