

Fish Have a Protector as Hatchery Awaits Completion



Each morning and evening Kenny Calica checks the traps at the Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery as part of his job as bio-technician. Migrating fish swim up a ladder and into the trap to be counted, weighed, measured and then released. The hatchery is not yet fully operational although Calica has been employed there for 6 months.

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Discouraging trespassers is one of the ways Kenny Calica keeps himself busy as the "lone ranger" of the Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery. Calica and his wife and daughter have

lived at the hatchery since January and have received many unwelcome visitors.

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As the sole employee of the nearly completed Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery, Kenny Calica wishes he could be even more alone.

He spends a good part of his days constructing gates, erecting signs and otherwise discouraging visitors.

Far from being a disagreeable old hermit, the youthful Calica is simply protecting his fish wards from their most frequent visitors — poachers.

The waiting hatchery, which should begin full operation by October, lies on the banks of the Warm Springs River in quiet seclusion.

But increasingly it has been the target of trespassing fishermen, raiders and revelers. The solitary life of the bio-technician, his wife Nadine and their daughter Bobbi Jean, who took up residence at the hatchery in January, can get a bit hectic now and then.

Uninvited company is often found driving around his gate at night and "cutting cookies" in the gravel parking lot. One morning Calica discovered that the fish trap, which collects fish migrants for counting, had been broken into during the night and thirty fish were missing.

Regularly Calica finds fishermen, often local kids, violating the 800 ft. buffer zone for the \$6 million federal development. Calica is concerned with the snagging they are doing, which damages those fish not actually caught.

Calica has been waging a one-man campaign against the offenders as caretaker of the hatchery, which sits just a few miles up from Kah-Nee-Ta. However, he enjoys announced visitors such as the students and other groups that come and tour the facility. And he is looking forward to sharing his days with the newly-hired Hatchery Manager, Gary White, from the Quinault Fish Hatchery.

Up until now, Calica has been the hatchery technician, the gatekeeper, the night watchman, the tour guide and the clerk while the permanent staff of 8 has yet to be hired.

Although the egg-taking equipment is not ready, fish are climbing the ladders and being detained long enough for Calica to count, weight and measure them.

Each morning and evening the trained technician checks the traps and keeps a careful record of the numbers of steelhead and spring chinook migrants. Calica says the steelhead run is over and numbered about 700, slightly lower than in previous years.

Already Kenny has counted 720 spring chinook salmon, whose run just peaked and is expected to end in late June.

This kind of company Calica likes and he is becoming quite familiar with fish behavior. Steelhead, which he had never worked with before, are "a lot spookier and harder to handle" than chinook and coho, he said.

The quiet but articulate bio-technician is no stranger to fish. At 20 he has already had three years of experience with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a technician at the Willard-Little White Salmon Fish Hatchery in Cook, Washington.

There he was trained for his Warm Springs position and fulfilled such duties as feeding fish, measuring and weighing them, assisting in the spawning and hatching of eggs, and taking water samples for pollution monitoring. He expects his job at Warm Springs, which was located for him by the Tribal Natural Resources Department, to be much the same.

Vincent Wallulatum is being similarly trained at Willard and will eventually be transferred to the Warm Springs site. The Fish and Wildlife Service is looking for an All-Indian staff to operate the facility.

Calica is already eyeing the position of Assistant Manager, realizing that he will need at least two years of schooling to qualify.

In the meantime, his responsibilities as bio-technician will increase as hatchery operations move into full swing.

Calica will spend much of the summer cleaning out holding ponds, familiarizing himself with the machinery and otherwise readying the hatchery for the production of eggs.

By October, according to U.S.F.W. Hatchery Specialist Marvin Smith, the holding ponds, the interior spawning facilities and two of four residences will be complete.

At that time, with more hired staff on hand, 125,000, rainbow trout eggs will be obtained from the state hatchery at Oak Springs.

The holding of steelhead should begin the first of next year when an anticipated 175 adult females and an equal number of males will be detained and the eggs artificially fertilized. Fourteen months later, about 140,000 seven-inch steelhead will be released.

The procedure for spring chinook will be similar but greater numbers of yearlings will be produced — about 400,000 according to the original master plan.

Calica's counting and the hatchery's ongoing research into stream capacity will provide the data to determine the optimum yield for the Warm Springs-Deschutes River system.

Fisheries Management Biologist Dan Diggs, out of the Vancouver Fish and Wildlife office, explained the goal of the hatchery as maintaining the wild runs of fish by supplementing them with stocked fish. Because of the great demand of many user groups from the Deschutes to the ocean ("Everybody wants more fish") Marvin Smith sees no end to stocking.

Finishing touches should be put on the hatchery in fiscal year 1978, although money has not yet been appropriated. Until the automatic feeding equipment and the alarm system are installed Calica will probably be feeding fish by hand and continuing to wave his baseball bat at poachers.

When the facility is complete it will be one of the most modern and automated hatcheries, according to Smith. Human hands need not touch the fish except for possible measuring.

The Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery will also be the most attractive of the northwest facilities, said Smith. It was designed to fit the surroundings and blend with the Kah-Nee-Ta architecture because of the expected flow of visitors from the resort.

Both Smith and Diggs pointed to the benefits of the hatchery to the Confederated Tribes. The harvest of salmon and steelhead in the Deschutes-Warm Springs system should increase noticeably while lower river fishermen should also see improvement.

The human resource is also of interest to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Soon Kenny Calica's "No Fishing" signs should be swapped for "Help Wanted" signs and he will be joined at his river retreat by other tribal members seeking challenging employment.

He really doesn't mind company, as long as they don't steal his fish.