

Fish finally return

After a long wait, fishermen were glad to see the spring Chinook salmon run finally appear last week. Just three weeks ago, fewer than 500 fish had crossed the fish ladders at Bonneville Dam.

There was speculation that the spring run this year would be a complete disaster.

Then early last week more fish finally appeared. On Tuesday of that week close to 2,500 fish crossed the ladders, bringing the total as of that date to more than 12,038.

The increased numbers meant the tribes were expecting to catch their allotment.

This was the second year in a row that the fish waited a long time before finally going up past the dam: the salmon biologically waiting for some apparent trigger to send them up the stair-step-like ladders, past a counting window and on their way upriver. In recent years, the run has been as low 42,000 in 1999 and as high as 438,000 in 2001.



Bill Rhoades photos



Mike Gauvin and Larry Holliday (top photo) of the Warm Springs Fisheries Department bag a fresh-caught spring Chinook for storage in tribal freezer. Stanley "Bear Tracks" Simtustus (lower left photo) weighs spring salmon for storage in tribal freezer (lower right).

Agency approves reduced salmon seasons

(AP) — NOAA Fisheries gave formal approval last month to sharply reduced commercial salmon fishing seasons off Oregon and California to protect struggling returns of wild fall chinook salmon in the Klamath River.

The agency said the reduced seasons will produce about 40 percent of the fish normally caught by salmon trollers on the West Coast, but salmon fishermen maintain that in the 700-mile stretch of Oregon and Northern California most severely affected the catch will be 10 percent of a traditional spring to fall season.

There is no commercial fishing on 400 miles of coast straddling the mouth of the Klamath and strictly limited fishing on another 300 miles. Recreational fishing was also cut back, but not so severely.

NOAA Fisheries spokesman Todd Ungerecht said the emergency rule approved by the agency closely followed the seasons approved earlier this

month by the Pacific Fishery Management Council.

Meanwhile, the agency is still doing an economic analysis of petitions from the governors of California and Oregon and members of Congress to declare a fishing disaster, which would open the way for federal aid to salmon fishermen, Ungerecht said.

However, NOAA Fisheries has informed fishermen that there is no money available for disaster relief, said Dave Bitts, a Eureka, Calif., salmon fisherman and secretary of the Pacific Coast Federation of fishermen's Associations. Similar petitions for disaster relief last year were denied.

"I don't have kids to put through college and my boat is paid for, so I should be able to survive this, but not everybody will," said Bitts. "We're trying to get enough fishing opportunity for the shoreside businesses to stay open. If they go belly up then three or four years down the road when there are fish to

catch it won't do us any good."

Since 2000, commercial harvests on the West Coast have averaged over 700,000 Chinook annually, and last year landings in Oregon and California were worth \$36.3 million.

This is the third straight year that returns of wild chinook salmon to the Klamath have been projected below the minimum of 35,000 set in management plans, and next year is looking no better.

Seasons were reduced somewhat last year, and there had been fears salmon fishing would be cut off on the entire West Coast this year, but federal biologists estimated that the reduced seasons would allow 21,000 wild chinook to return, enough to keep the run going.

Members of Congress from Oregon and California have introduced legislation to provide \$81 million in aid for fishermen, tribes and related businesses, as well as \$45 million to restore habitat on the Klamath River.

Next deadline to submit items to the Spilyay Tymoo is Friday, May 19.

Pikeminnows again have a price on their heads

(AP) — The Northern Pikeminnow, the scourge of Columbia River salmon runs, has a price on its head again this year.

The Northern Pikeminnow Management Program will pay from \$4 to \$8 for each of the predators delivered to stations along the Columbia and Snake rivers.

The program began last week on the Columbia River below the John Day Dam and will start May 15 for the upstream reaches to Priest Rapids Dam in central Washington and to Hells Canyon Dam on the Snake River in Idaho. The season closes Oct. 1.

Mature pikeminnow thrive on juvenile salmon, and fishing has removed about 2.7 million of them since 1990, including nearly 300,000 last year.

The Bonneville Power Administration says the program has cut juvenile salmon losses to prey by 25 percent.

The first 100 bring \$4 each. The next 300 are worth \$5 each. After 400 are turned in, they're worth \$8 each.

To sweeten the deal, specially tagged fish are worth \$500 each.

Top earners have made nearly \$35,000 in a season. The BPA says the average is several hundred dollars.

Eligible fish must be at least 9 inches long and have been caught in the Columbia River between the mouth and Priest Rapids Dam or in the Snake river between the mouth and Hells Canyon Dam.

Participants must register daily at a registration station each day prior to fishing. The catch must be turned in daily, and vouchers are issued for qualified fish.

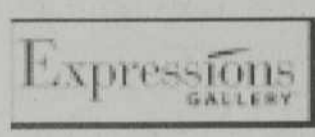
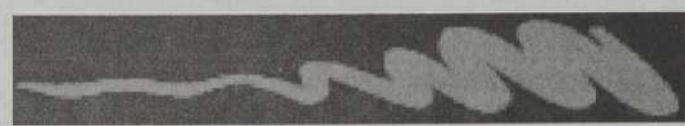
The liquid pikeminnow are used for liquid organic fertilizer, and as fish meal in livestock feed.

Information about where to find northern pikeminnow, how to fish for them and how to qualify for the bounty is available from the Washington Sport Reward Hot Line at (800) 858-9015.

For voucher information, call (800) 769-9362 or (503) 595-3297 in Portland.



Spring Time Painting Is Here!



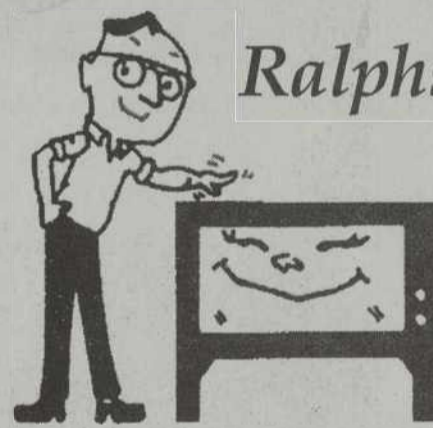
Madras Paint & Glass

1076 SW Hwy 97 in Madras, ph. 475-2166

Open 7:30-5:30 M-F; 9-4 Sat

Ralph's TV & Furniture

10% OFF 
Mattress & Box Springs



Ralph's TV, Furniture & Appliance

525 S.E. 5th Street
Madras, OR 97741

475-2578

Serving
Central Oregon
since 1974

FENDERS by ENDRES



Need A Tow?
Call on Joe

Fast, Courteous 24-Hour Service. Accident Recovery. Roll Back, for damage-free Towing. Statewide coverage, Insurance approved.

475-6491 office, or 480-9685 cell