

Garcia already has 2 buckle wins

By Dave McMechan
Spilyay Tymoo

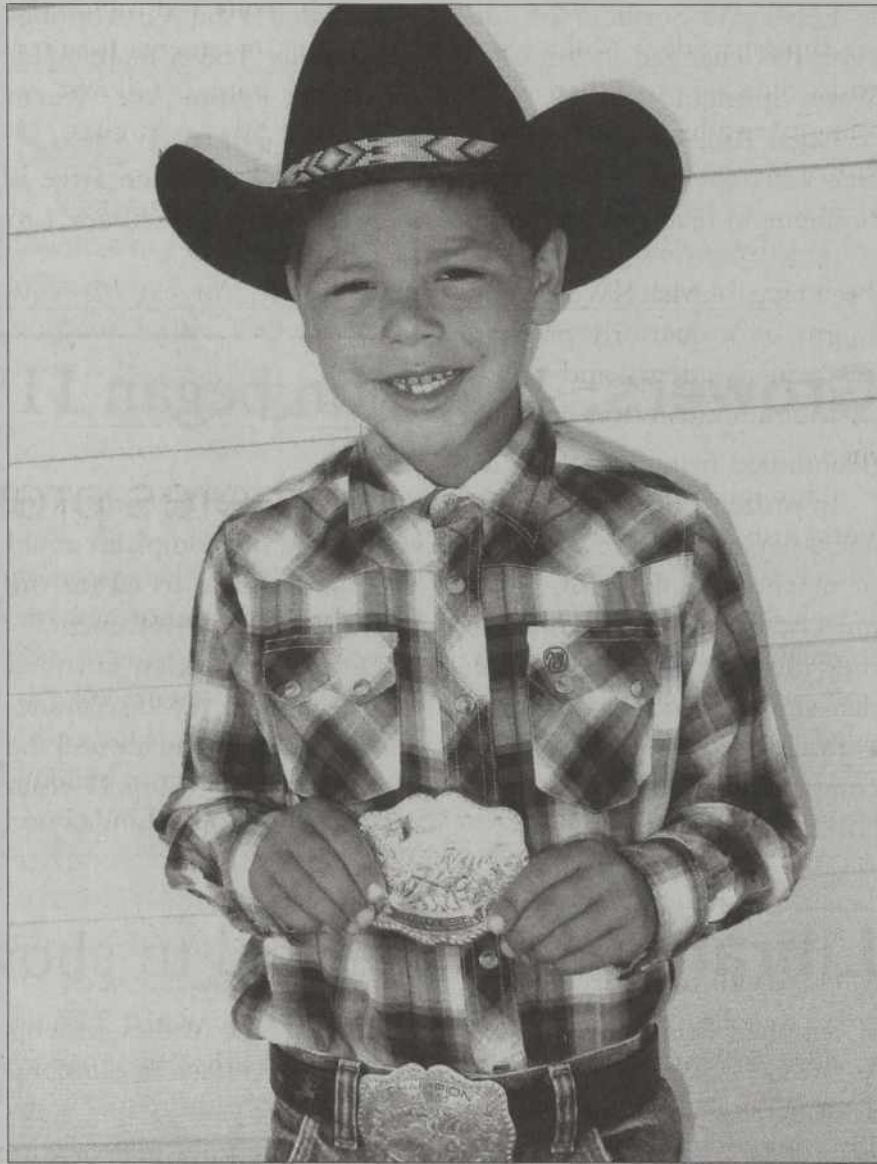
At age 6, young cowboy Avan Garcia already has two buckle wins at youth rodeo competitions in the Northwest. His favorite competitions so far are mutton busting and calf-riding events.

He won his first buckle at the Fourth of July Buckaroo Rodeo at Molalla. On July 31 at Hood River he won his second buckle. He has finished third-place or better in 80 percent of his rodeo competitions.

Avan Garcia is the son of Aldo Garcia and Della Rae Suppah, both of Warm Springs.

"Della and I are very proud that Avan has followed in the footsteps of his grandfather Delbert Garcia," said Aldo.

Delbert, he said, was part of the rodeo circuit for years around the West Coast, competing in the saddle bronc competitions through most of his life. Avan also follows in the foot-



Avan Garcia with buckles won at recent rodeo events.

steps of his great-grandfather, Wally Garcia of Elko, Nev., who was a lifetime cowboy and rancher.

"Avan is always putting himself in that cowboy role, talking cowboy this and cowboy that, and 'Which is the next rodeo, dad?'" said Aldo.

"As parents," he said, "we can only insure to him that we support him in whatever he would like to do."

Some of the main events Avan has competed in during 2011 are:

The Cowdeo in Jefferson County, the Root Feast Rodeo in Warm Springs, Tygh Ridge, White Swan Junior Rodeo, Pi-Ume-Sha, Molalla, Warm Springs Play Day, Santiam Canyon Stampede, and the Hood River Rodeo.

Upcoming rodeos are Heppner-Morrow County, Klamath Treaty Days, Cheney Pee Wee, and La Grande.

Congratulations on the buckle wins, Avan!

Salmon plan rejected

A federal judge in Oregon has ruled the Obama administration's attempt to make federal hydroelectric dams in the Northwest safer for protected salmon once again violates the Endangered Species Act.

In a sternly worded ruling, U.S. District Judge James Redden in Portland wrote that the plan, known as a biological opinion, is too vague and uncertain on specific steps that will be taken in future years to improve salmon habitat.

Redden added that he doesn't think the government can meet the standards of the Endangered Species Act by habitat improvements alone, and it is time to consider new options, including removing some of the dams.

The judge left the plan in place through 2013, when federal agencies must come up with more specific projects to help salmon through 2018.

While the dams have provided the West with cheap hydroelectric power for decades, they are also a leading factor in the steady decline in populations of wild salmon, which only account for a small fraction of annual returns anymore. The bulk of the fish returning each year to spawn come from hatcheries.

Since the 1990s, 14 different species of salmon and steelhead from the Columbia Basin have been protected as threatened or endangered.

Earthjustice attorney Todd True, who represented the conservation and fishing groups that challenged the biological opinion, noted this

is the third straight time Redden has rejected the government's attempt to say that the harm caused by the dams can be mitigated by improvements to habitat.

The judge is saying, "It is time to go in a new direction," True said. "We have been saying that for years. Hopefully the government will get the message now."

A spokesman for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries Service, which wrote the biological opinion, said they were still evaluating whether to appeal the ruling.

"We are of course disappointed that the court has not agreed with all of our arguments in this long-standing litigation, but the court specifically recognizes that the unprecedented level of regional collaboration over the past few years has provided beneficial measures that help protection for listed species," Brian Gorman said in an email. "We'll continue our efforts to provide protection for salmon and steelhead in the Basin and work toward their recovery."

The 2010 biological opinion covers 14 federally owned and operated hydroelectric dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers in Oregon, Washington and Montana. Under the Endangered Species Act, a government project like these dams cannot jeopardize the survival of threatened and endangered species. Otherwise, it must come up with steps to reduce the harm, known as reasonable and prudent alternatives.

NW tribes drive effort to save ancient fish

(AP) — As long as American Indians have lived in the Pacific Northwest, they have looked to a jawless, eel-like fish for food.

Tribes once harvested the lamprey from rivers throughout the Columbia Basin, which stretches from the Oregon coast up into Canada. But with dozens of hydroelectric dams in the way, the fish has followed the path of the buffalo — from a food staple of a people to a curiosity.

Today, the tribes in the Northwest have just one place to go for them: a 40-foot waterfall on the Willamette River flanked by an abandoned paper mill and a power plant, and located about a dozen miles upstream from a Superfund site.

Unlike salmon, which have drawn billions of dollars in government funds to modify dams and restore habitat, the lamprey have gone largely ignored. It's the tribes that still eat them that are driving the effort to bring them back.

The greatest threat the fish now face is the dams, which "will probably lead to their demise," said Aaron Jackson, who heads the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation efforts to restore lamprey.

"That's really sad," he said, of a fish that has survived hundreds of millions of years while other animals, such as dinosaurs, didn't. "That something this old would just wink out in my lifetime — that's unfathomable to me."

The lamprey, whose English name comes from the Latin for "rock sucker," uses its mouth to glog onto rocks and other fish.

Several years after hatching, they swim downstream to the ocean, where they suck onto the sides of whales, sea lions and fish, feeding as parasites. At full maturity, they swim back upriver to spawn and die.

Three days a week in July, Indians drive hundreds of miles from their reservations, wade through the green water and, with hands covered in white cotton gloves, pull the writhing gray fish from rocks and stuff them into burlap sacks to take home.

There, tribal elders will grill the oily, pungent fish, or cut them into links and roast them like hotdogs over open fires.

The tribes of the Northwest have had a special connection with the lamprey for thousands of years.

The seven gill slits on the side

of its head marked them as a food designated for the region's tribes by the creator, corresponding to the seven drummers and seven songs of longhouse ceremonies, Jackson said.

But as more dams were built, the lamprey declined.

Biologists have estimated that 1 million were still crossing Bonneville Dam on the Columbia east of Portland in the 1970s, before accurate counts were taken. That dropped to 200,000 by 2003, and stands at about 20,000 now, said Bob Heinith, hydroelectric program coordinator for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

A petition to list them as an endangered species was turned down for lack of information.

The full gamut of reasons for the declining numbers is not well-understood, but the dams are clearly a big one. About half the fish that pass one dam fail to get over the next, until only a dozen make it to the Idaho border, Heinith said.

Fish ladders and screens designed for salmon are tough on lamprey. Pollution is, too. Studies on eels in Europe link high levels of industrial toxins, such as dioxin from paper mills, mercury from coal power plants, and pesticides, with low levels of reproductive success.

Based on an agreement with the tribes, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working on ways to get lamprey over the dams without making it tougher for salmon, which can be tricky, said David Clugston, a biologist for the corps.

Adult lamprey, which grow to about 2 feet long and are as big around as a fat hotdog, have trouble with the fast water and sharp corners of fish ladders designed for salmon.

The young ones, the size of a nightcrawler, get stuck on screens designed to keep young salmon out of turbines.

So far there have been baby steps. Special lamprey ramps have been installed at Bonneville Dam, and fish ladders have been modified at two more.

The tribes are experimenting with capturing adult lamprey at dams and releasing them in tributaries, hoping they will re-establish populations of young lamprey that emit the pheromones the adults follow to spawning beds.

They are also talking to experts in Finland about building lamprey hatcheries.

With no dams between it and

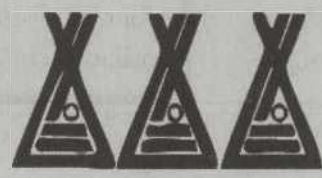
the ocean, Willamette Falls has become the last best place to harvest.

Tribes from the Warm Springs, Umatilla and Grande Ronde reservations in Oregon, the Yakama reservation in Washington and the Nez Perce reservation in Idaho drive there every July. The time is dependent on when Portland General Electric reduces the flow of water over the falls, diverting it into the dam's electricity-generating turbines and in the process making it easier to harvest the

fish.

Tribal members leaned off the bows of boats, balanced on slippery rocks or dove into pools to grab the wriggling lamprey. Tribal elders who enjoy the strong fishy taste roast the oil-dripping flesh over small cookfires amid reservation housing projects.

Chayenne Wahnet, 18, laughed with friends harvesting the fish, but has no intention of actually eating one. "I never tried them, and I don't want to," said Wahnet. "They look ugly."



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