

Colville tribes freezing part of salmon catch

OMAK, Wash. (AP) — For each of the past few summers, the Colville Tribes have caught thousands of salmon using a commercial boat and a purse seine net, and distributed the fresh fish to tribal members.

This summer — as their ancestors before them did — they'll start putting some of their catch away for the lean winter months.

But instead of setting up drying racks on the river banks, the Colvilles will freeze the fish, and offer it to elders and tribal members long after the salmon fishing is over.

Their salmon-preserving facility in a newly-renovated building at the old Paschal Sherman Indian School east of Omak is currently a one-man operation.

Tribal elder Glen Launer once worked in a fish processing plant in Alaska.

He's now in charge of washing, vacuum sealing and freezing the summer chinook and sockeye that Dale Clark brings to him after a morning of fishing in the tribe's fishing boat, the Dream Catcher.

"They're our new, modern-day salmon chiefs," laughs Joe Peone, director of Fish and Wildlife for the Colville Tribes.

But he's not really joking.

Although Clark and Launer are using modern methods to catch and preserve the fish, they are adhering to the old principles

by making sure the wild salmon escape to spawn, and by sharing this bounty with elders and others who cannot fish for themselves.

Peone said he'd like to see one-quarter of the salmon caught this summer put away in their giant, walk-in freezer. That could mean 5,000 to 8,000 sockeye and summer chinook preserved for later use in ceremonies and to round out their winter diet.

It's all part of a larger effort by the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation to bring more salmon back to the upper Columbia River, and provide more of this traditional food to tribal members, and to others who fish in the upper reaches of the Columbia Basin.

"They could just go in and throw gill nets in the river, but they don't because the best way to harvest is selective fishing," said Stephen Smith, a fisheries consultant and biologist who used to work for NOAA Fisheries and the Bonneville Power Administration.

Smith said from his perspective, the Colvilles are doing everything right.

"They are the leaders in the Basin on selective fishing and proper hatchery management to restore wild runs," he said. The operation includes a careful sorting of chinook salmon to release

any wild fish to spawn, before harvesting those with a fin clipped, denoting they were hatchery-raised.

Smith helped the Colville Tribes hammer out a 2007 salmon harvest agreement with Washington state. It's an agreement designed to prepare for the tens of thousands of new spring and summer chinook to be produced at the tribe's Chief Joseph Hatchery, now under construction. Allocations will be renegotiated in a few years, once the hatchery is producing fish.

But it's already making a difference.

"Things are good right now in the upper river," Smith said. "I've been doing this for almost 40 years, and there's no doubt in my mind that the Colvilles are bringing more fish to the upper Columbia."

That's good news for sports fishermen, he said. More fish are coming back, and the state is setting higher limits and full-length fishing seasons.

"I believe if it weren't for this agreement, most of the state's harvest would be occurring in the lower river," he said. "The commercial net fishery and sports fishing on the lower river have an insatiable demand, and a lot of political power."

Peone said he, too, believes sports fishermen are benefiting from the Colville Tribes' agree-

ment with the state. Some fishermen still worry when they see the tribes' commercial boat netting hundreds of salmon on the Columbia River. "But there's an allocation for you, and there's one for us, and we don't feel we're cutting into anybody's allocation," he said.

Before striking the agreement, the Colvilles relied mostly on salmon considered surplus at hatcheries around the region. But the 2,000 surplus salmon didn't go far among nearly 10,000 tribal members, Peone said. Smith said the tribe harvested fewer than 900 salmon. Now, their annual harvest is nearly tenfold.

Last year, the tribe caught and distributed some 16,000 sockeye and 2,500 summer chinook. About 4,000 of those went to other tribes in Washington and Canada.

"For a lot of years, we weren't a player at the table. That's why we started pushing for this hatchery," Peone said.

In a few short years, the tribe has been able to bring many more fish to the region, and to the tables of tribal members.

"The amazing thing is, Chief Joseph Hatchery is not even on line yet, and that'll return tens of thousand of additional salmon," Smith added.

Alaska pursuing dam project at cost of \$4.5B

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — Alaska is moving forward with what would be the highest dam built in the United States in decades, a \$4.5 billion project aimed at helping meet the energy needs of the state's most populous region.

Gov. Sean Parnell said that completion of the 700-foot-high Susitna River dam is scheduled for 2023. But major hurdles must be overcome first, including securing the necessary permits and financing. State support is expected to be vital to the project's prospects.

Officials say the dam, which would be located about halfway between Anchorage and Fairbanks, would help meet Alaska's goal of having half its electricity generated from renewable energy sources by 2025. Parnell said the project would generate about 2.6 million megawatt hours of electricity a year. It would have a reservoir 39 miles long and up to 2 miles wide.

A similar proposal was tabled in the mid-1980s as the cost of other sources of electricity remained relatively cheap. But Parnell said hydropower has the capacity to create jobs and new opportunities and open up the

economy just as other major infrastructure projects of the past, and even the Internet more recently, have. And he said it's time to commit to this project, which he sees as part of a larger state energy package that also includes oil and natural gas development.

The Alaska Energy Authority, which is overseeing the project, is planning to file this fall a notice of intent with federal regulators, essentially letting them know the state is ready to move ahead.

"It's time for Alaska to make the needed investment in renewables that we have in abundance, more than any state in this nation," Parnell said.

Richard Leo believes the project is unnecessary, in part given the recently announced, larger-than-believed natural gas reserves in Cook Inlet that could be tapped to meet electricity demands for Anchorage and much of south-central Alaska.

Parnell said the dam project does not render moot the pursuit of an in-state gas pipeline, saying abundant energy creates opportunities and "you can never have too much opportunity."

Judge tosses Sioux lawsuit over Black Hills money

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Individual members of the Sioux tribes cannot persist with a lawsuit seeking a share of hundreds of millions of dollars awarded in old court cases for the improper seizure of the Black Hills and other land more than a century ago, a federal judge has ruled.

In a ruling issued last week, U.S. District Judge Lawrence Piersol dismissed a lawsuit filed by 19 members of Sioux tribes. He said individual tribal members have no legal standing to

seek the money because it was awarded to eight tribes, and prior court decisions have found that individual American Indians do not have a right to tribal property or a claim to a share of money from the sale of tribal land.

The Sioux tribes have refused to accept money awarded for the Black Hills in a 1980 U.S. Supreme Court decision, and instead have sought the return of the land, Piersol noted. The lawsuit seeking payments for individual tribal members could

not continue without the participation of the tribes, but they have refused to give up their immunity to being sued, he said.

"That difference of position is an internal tribal matter into which the federal courts cannot intrude," Piersol wrote.

A lawyer representing the individual tribal members who filed the lawsuit did not immediately return a phone call seeking comment.

Terry Pechota of Rapid City, a lawyer representing the Rose-

bud Sioux Tribe, said the tribes welcome the decision because any distribution of money from the 1980 court case would weaken the tribes' efforts to regain land in the Black Hills. The Rosebud Sioux filed documents in the lawsuit stating it seeks the return of land and rejects any monetary settlement.

"The consensus is, the tribes want this land back," Pechota said Monday.

The dispute is more than 130 years old.

NY's Senecas doubling hotel capacity at casino

SALAMANCA, N.Y. (AP) — The Seneca Indian Nation says it will nearly double hotel capacity at its Allegany Casino in New York's Southern Tier.

The nation's gambling business arm, Seneca Gaming Corp., on Monday announced plans to build a second hotel tower that will add about 200 hotel rooms at a cost of \$53 million. The existing 212-room tower opened in 2007. Seneca of-

ficials say it's been more than 95 percent full for the past nine months.

The Seneca Allegany Casino & Resort in Salamanca has more than 2,000 slot machines and 30 table games.

The Senecas have projects in the works at its two other casino sites. Seneca Gaming says it's begun renovating hotel rooms at its Niagara Falls complex and is reviewing design proposals for a new casino in Buffalo.

Candidates for Okla tribe's chief resume campaigns

TULSA, Okla. (AP) — The candidates for Cherokee Nation principal chief have hit the campaign trail again, hoping to reach even more voters before the Sept. 24 election.

Incumbent Chief Chad Smith and tribal council member Bill John Baker have resumed sending out emails and mailers to registered voters, encouraging them to vote or send in absentee ballot requests by Aug. 12.

The Tulsa World reports that Smith has opened a second campaign office, and an Aug. 16 fundraiser for Baker's campaign has been scheduled.

Last month, the tribe's Supreme Court invalidated June 25 election results between Smith and Baker because justices couldn't determine with a mathematical certainty who won.

The tribe is one of the largest in the country, with about 300,000 members.

The chief administers a \$600 million annual tribal budget.

The next Spilyay deadline is Friday, August 19. Thank you!

Claims Filing Assistance

in the \$760 million Keepseagle Indian Farmer/Rancher Settlement

DATE: August 15-16, 2011 TIME: Between 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

**LOCATION: Redding Rancheria
2000 Redding Rancheria Road
Redding, CA**

What is this About?

The class action settles claims that the USDA discriminated against Native American farmers and ranchers seeking farm loans or loan servicing.

Who is Included?

The Settlement includes:

- Native American farmers who:
 - Farmed or ranched (or attempted to) any time from 1981 to late 1999.
 - Tried to get a farm loan or loan servicing from the USDA.
 - Complained about discrimination to the USDA either directly or through a representative.
- Heirs of the above.

How Much Money Can I Get?

You may be eligible for a payment of up to \$50,000 or more and full or partial loan forgiveness.

To receive a payment, you must file a claim by December 27, 2011

To get help in filing a claim, attend a meeting or call: 1-888-233-5506
or visit: www.IndianFarmClass.com