

## New hatchery to bring salmon to Colville tribe

BRIDGEPORT, Wash. (AP) — The first salmon hatchery on the Columbia River designed with the latest scientific recommendations on how to avoid weakening the naturally spawning populations is 80 percent complete and will begin producing fish in the spring.

Promised to American Indian tribes decades ago, the Chief Joseph Hatchery is located directly across the river from Chief Joseph Dam — where each year salmon still return year, only to bump their heads against the massive concrete structure that prevents them from continuing their journey to spawn in tributaries northeast of Bridgeport.

Unlike the dams below it, there is no fish passage at the second-largest power-producing dam on the Columbia, second only to Grand Coulee Dam above it.

But with this hatchery, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation will bring

thousands of fish back to a corner of their 1.4 million-acre reservation below the dam, where they can gather surplus fish, and provide tribal members and others across the region with new fishing opportunities.

The \$49 million hatchery is funded by the Bonneville Power Administration. It will produce some 1.9 million spring and summer Chinook each year.

Tribal leaders and officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers toured the facility Oct. 16 — from the ladders where returning hatchery salmon will be captured, through the incubation and rearing stations, to the runways and holding ponds on this 15-acre site owned by the Corps.

"This is an example of the tribe taking charge of its own destiny," Col. Bruce Estok, the Corps' Seattle District Commander, said after the tour. "This has got to be the best hatchery in the state or

*Fish managers believe that tens of thousands of additional summer Chinook will be available for harvest...*

the Pacific Northwest right now. We're proud to work with you on it."

Northwestern Division Commander Col. Anthony Funkhouser added, "It's not just about the tribe. There are so many other people who will benefit from this project," including all the fishermen from the ocean clear up to Bridgeport, as well as several other American Indian tribes with whom the Colvilles are sharing their returns.

Depending on returns, fish managers believe that tens of thousands of additional summer Chinook will be available for harvest in the Pacific

Ocean from Vancouver to Alaska, and in the lower and upper Columbia River as a result of the hatchery.

Joe Peone, director of the Colville Tribal Fish and Wildlife Department, said of the 2.9 million Chinook raised at the facility, the tribe is expecting between 12,000 and 15,000 Chinook salmon to return in surplus of what they need for production.

Before they get there, fishermen all along the Columbia River system will have an opportunity to fish for these hatchery salmon, he noted.

Once it's opened, the hatchery will include an interpretive center with information about the hatchery and Colville tribes, and a walking trail that loops through the property.

Visitors might also see tribal fishermen using traditional dip nets and hoop nets from new dock-like scaffolds to be built along the shoreline.

Hatchery manager Pat

Phillips said what's special about this project is that it's the first hatchery designed under new specifications laid out by the Hatchery Scientific Review Group.

Under Congressional direction, the panel of independent scientists analyzed hatcheries in the Pacific Northwest and came up with recommendations for preserving the wild genetics of naturally spawning salmon while allowing for hatchery production.

Phillips said among other measures, at least three-fourths of the returning hatchery salmon will be harvested, to prevent a large number of hatchery fish from genetically mixing with naturally-spawned fish.

The project also includes two acclimation ponds at Omak and Riverside, each of which can rear up to 400,000 Chinook for release into the Okanogan River. A weir on the lower part of the Okanogan will help the tribe capture hatchery fish return-

ing there.

Sixty-six people are currently employed on the hatchery's construction work, and once it's finished, it will employ 11 full-time workers, many of whom are tribal members with recently-completed college degrees.

Chief Joseph Hatchery is one of four hatcheries authorized for construction when Grand Coulee Dam eliminated salmon from surrounding rivers on the reservation. The Winthrop, Entiat and Leavenworth hatcheries were all completed.

Tribal chairman John Sirois said there's a huge excitement among tribal members about the fishing opportunities as well as the distribution of surplus fish — both fresh and frozen — to members and other tribes.

He said he often fishes at the Leavenworth hatchery, but now will have opportunities closer to his home in Omak. "We just can't wait until it gets opened," he said.

## Ex-congressman impressed by dams' removal

PORT ANGELES, Wash. (AP) — The former congressman who sponsored the law to tear down the two dams on the Olympic Peninsula's Elwha River says he's very impressed with the work, and that salmon have already returned to their former habitat above the dams.

Former U.S. Rep. Al Swift introduced the legislation 20 years ago to remove the century-old Elwha Dam and the 85-year-old Glines Canyon Dam. He tells the Peninsula Daily News that he grew up in a generation that built dams, and it took him a while to see the logic of tearing

them down.

The Democrat represented the northern parts of the peninsula from 1979 to 1993, when redistricting moved the area into a different district. Swift retired from the House of Representatives in 1995.

He toured the Elwha by

land and by air last week.

The last remnants of the Elwha Dam were gone in early March, and the Glines Canyon Dam, 9 miles upstream, has been reduced to a 50-foot waterfall, with the former Lake Mills reservoir behind it almost gone.

## Oklahoma tribe on track to buy La., Miss. casinos

JACKSON, Miss. (AP) — An Oklahoma Indian tribe is moving forward with buying the DiamondJacks casinos in Bossier City, La., and Vicksburg, Miss.

A bankruptcy auction did not occur after Global Gaming Solutions was the only bidder to qualify. The unit of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma plans to pay \$27.5 million in cash and \$97.5 million in new debt to secured lenders of current owner Legends Gaming.

Legends filed for Chap-

ter 11 bankruptcy reorganization in Shreveport, La., in July.

The new owners won't be able to complete the purchase until a bankruptcy judge approves.

Court papers show Legends, even after an earlier bankruptcy, owes lenders \$298 million. Almost all of that is secured debt.

The tribe owns 13 casinos in Oklahoma's competitive Indian gambling market, plus horse racing tracks in Oklahoma and Texas.

## Choctaw casino nearly done

CREOLA, La. (AP) — The Jena Choctaw Pines Casino in Grant Parish is expected to open soon.

The casino, developed after many years of trying by the Jena Band of Choctaw Indians, is nearing completion. It is about 60 percent done and is expected to open in January.

"It's finally going to be a reality after many years," tribal Chief B. Cheryl Smith said. "This has been our goal for about 20 years. We've had a lot of devoted leaders working on it. I'm as excited as I can be that it's finally coming true."

The casino is located off U.S. Highway 167, just north of the Alexandria/Pineville area. It will be a Class II casino, meaning it can have gambling machines but not table games such as blackjack or roulette.

The casino is expected to employ about 300 people.

The first phase of the project is a 46,000 square foot gambling floor that includes 700 machines and a poker room. The casino will have a buffet that can seat roughly 170 people and a sports bar with a capacity of about 75.

Tribal leaders are hoping to expand in the future. The next phase would more than double the size of the casino building, expanding gambling and restaurant space and perhaps adding meeting space. A third phase would add a hotel and entertainment venue to the property.

The timeline of future expansion has not been set.

"Based on how we get out of the gate will dictate the next phase of construction," Pepple said. "That clearly takes some time."

Patience is something the Jena Band of Choctaws has. The tribe has been exploring gambling opportunities for years, but met resistance.

The tribe had eyed Logansport as a potential location, but couldn't get state officials to sign off on a gaming compact. A compact was not needed at the current location because Grant Parish is considered part of the tribe's native land.

In 2001, local businessman Mike Wahlder donated more than 40 acres — which includes the current casino site — to the tribe. Pepple expects the casino in its initial form to draw people from about a 100 mile radius.

## Halloween



(Continued from page 1)

The Health and Wellness Center is also having a Halloween Basket silent auction.

You can see the basket on Halloween Day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Pod A at the clinic. The auction will start at 1 p.m.

### In Simnasho

Simnasho's Annual Halloween Party will take place Halloween night at the Simnasho Fire Hall. Trick or Treating will start

at 5:30. Potluck dinner is at 6:30 followed by games until 9pm. Any prize donations or candy donations for seniors to hand out would be appreciated.

The Jefferson County Chamber of Commerce Halloween Merchant's Costume Contest, Wednesday, October 31. Call the office to register your business in the contest. Judging will be done from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the 31.



Carvers at last week's Pumpkin Party.



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