

BPA: Colville Tribes to celebrate opening of Chief Joseph Hatchery

Local News

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Bridgeport, WA - The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation will host a First Salmon and Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony to open a state-of-the-art hatchery June 20 in Bridgeport, Wash., near Chief Joseph Dam. The facility will significantly boost the availability of chinook salmon for the tribe and for sport fishing in the Columbia River as well as reintroduce spring chinook to the Okanogan River.



The \$50 million hatchery will release up to 2.9 million chinook salmon. The construction and program implementation was a collaborative effort between the Colville Tribes, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bonneville Power Administration and Grant County Public Utility District. Additional partners include the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, Douglas County Public Utility District and Chelan County Public Utility District.

“The opening of the Chief Joseph Hatchery is a cause for celebration for the tribe,” said John Sirois, chairman of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. “It commemorates both the return of the chinook salmon and serves as a testament to the important and meaningful work that can be accomplished when federal, tribal and state entities come together for the common purpose of restoring our Columbia River.”

The completed project is due in part to a historic 2008 agreement, the Columbia Basin Fish Accords, that enables a greater level of cooperation between the federal agencies in the Northwest responsible for salmon recovery efforts and the tribes, as well as providing assured funding for numerous projects over a 10-year period.

“At the heart of this project is a lasting partnership that leverages the combined capabilities of the Colville Tribes and state and federal agencies to bring ecological, social and economic benefit to the Columbia River Basin,” said Lorri Bodi, vice president of BPA’s Environment, Fish and Wildlife department.

The main hatchery facility is located on 15 acres of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property on the north bank of the Columbia River within the boundaries of the Colville Indian Reservation. The Colville Tribes will manage the hatchery under guidelines recommended by the Hatchery Scientific Review Group, a committee of scientists that reviewed all salmon and steelhead hatcheries in the Columbia Basin at the request of the U.S. Congress.

The complex will include 40 raceways (10 feet by 120 feet), three rearing ponds and three acclimation ponds (both onsite and offsite at the Okanogan River). It will draw water from a combination of production wells and the reservoir behind the dam, Rufus Woods Lake.

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is committed to working with tribes as equal partners on programs and projects beneficial to tribes, and to address protected tribal resources and rights,” said Col. Bruce Estok, commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District. “This state-of-the-art facility will provide benefits to the Colville Tribes and the entire Columbia River Basin. It is representative of what can be accomplished through meaningful partnerships among the tribes and state and federal agencies to achieve a common goal.”

The hatchery will help to rebuild naturally spawning salmon runs in areas impacted by the construction and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System as well as provide partial mitigation for hydroelectric project impacts to Upper Columbia chinook salmon associated with the operation of the Mid-Columbia Public Utility District dams on the Columbia River.

“We are proud to celebrate our collective achievements and look forward to a long-lasting relationship with the Colville Tribes and the other partners involved with this important program,” said Terry Brewer, Grant PUD Commission president.

The day’s activities, which are open to the public, take place at both the Chief Joseph Hatchery administration building off of State Park Golf Course Road east of Washington State Route 17 and at a park adjacent to the hatchery.

The schedule of events:

Thursday, June 20 *Master of Ceremonies: John Sirois, Colville Business Council Chairman*

8 a.m. First Salmon Ceremony, Chief Joseph Hatchery Admin. Building Opening prayer and song, Lionel Orr, Colville tribal elder Capture first salmon, fillet and present to cook (at fish ladder) Storytelling and honoring tribal elder fishermen (Admin. Building)

10:30 a.m. Chief Joseph Hatchery ribbon-cutting celebration, park near hatchery Welcoming by John Sirois, Colville Business Council chairman Elder Prayer Speakers: **Colville Confederated Tribes** – John Sirois, Colville Business Council chairman; John Smith, former Fish and Wildlife director **Bonneville Power Administration** – Bill Drummond, administrator; Lorri Bodi, vice president, Environment, Fish and Wildlife **Northwest Power and Conservation Council** – Tom Karier, Council member **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** – Bruce A. Estok, commander, Seattle District **Grant County PUD** – Terry Brewer, commission president **Washington State Dept of Fish & Wildlife** – Phil Anderson, Director

12 p.m. Luncheon, park near hatchery Table song – Albert Andrews, Colville tribal elder (sharing of the first salmon) Recognition of project partners – John Sirois and Randall Friedlander, interim Fish and Wildlife director Introduction of recent graduates/hatchery workers – Pat Phillips, CJH manager Closing Prayer, tribal elder

1 p.m. Ribbon Cutting

1-3 p.m. tours, hatchery

Attendees can park at the Quik-E-Mart gas station in Bridgeport where shuttles will transport people to event and back. Look for the parking signs.