

Columbia Gorge Information and Education Office Fiscal Year 2012 Annual Report

The Columbia Gorge Information and Education Office (I&E) generates increased public awareness through expanded community outreach efforts and on-site visits. The I&E Manager continues to participate in off-site natural resource education events which generates support for Service programs. Our Service programs strive to meet the needs of our local and visiting public. The office provides outreach services for the Columbia River Gorge National Fish Hatchery (NFH) Complex which includes: Carson, Little White, Spring Creek and Willard National Fish Hatcheries and the Lower Columbia River Fish Health Center. The I&E staff coordinates with other fish and wildlife offices in the Pacific Region on special projects and events.



The I&E Office is staffed by one full-time Information and Education Specialist, Cheri Anderson; and a permanent part-time Park Ranger (Visitor Services), Jennifer Rowlen.

Management of the I&E program encompasses several offices including hatcheries, refuges, ecological services, fishery resource office

and a fish health center. Complexity is compounded by the full reimbursement of hatchery operations by other agencies (non-Service funding), the location of the Gorge Complex within the boundaries of two states (Oregon and Washington); six counties and within the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. A variety of communication strategies are essential to seek innovative ways to educate people, work with a variety of special interest groups, political and media representatives and organizations to gain understanding and support for Service programs.

Partnerships

We continue to be a subchapter with the 503(c) non-profit *Friends of Northwest Hatcheries*, based at the Leavenworth NFH. *Friends* financially supported Carson and Spring Creek NFH Open Houses with their annual \$200 contribution per station to purchase supplies and

**Friends of Northwest
Hatcheries**



refreshments. Friends also financially supported the ADA Fishing Platform Dedication at the Little White Salmon NFH this past July. The I&E Manager participates in quarterly board meetings via conference call and attends the annual meeting in Leavenworth, WA each fall.

Intra-agency partnerships include:

- Ecological Services field offices
- Fish Health Center
- Fishery Program Office
- National Fish Hatchery Program
- Regional Office
- Refuge field offices
- U.S. Geological Survey – Columbia River Research Lab

Inter-agency and NGO Partnerships:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Benton County Conservation District
- Bonneville Power Administration
- Boy Scouts of America
- Chambers of Commerce (Mt. Adams, Skamania, Hood River, The Dalles)
- Clark County Public Utilities
- Columbia Gorge Community College
- Columbia Gorge Ecology Institute
- Columbia Gorge Visitor's Association
- Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs
- Educational Service District 112 in Washington
- Educational Service District 74 in Oregon
- Environmental Information Coop (EIC)
- Grant County Public Utility District
- Lower Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group
- Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group
- Mid-Columbia Salmon Enhancement Board
- Mount Hood Community College
- News media
- NOAA Fisheries
- Northwest Service Academy
- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Port of Skamania
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE)
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- Underwood Conservation District (UCD)
- Universities of Idaho, Oregon and Washington

- Vancouver Water Resource Education Center
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Yakama Greenways Foundation
- Yakama Nation Fisheries Program

Education

Connecting People with Nature

The I&E Manager remains active on the Regional Connecting People With Nature Team. This team stems from the National Children and Nature Work Group and remains a top priority for the Service. This nationally inspired effort prompted by the book *Last Child in the Woods* considers the harsh reality that people, especially children, are spending less time outdoors. The I&E Manager participates in bimonthly team conference calls. Key issues this past year were exploring new ways to better connect people with nature, realizing and implementing innovative ways in which this group could incorporate Climate Change into our messages, keeping in the line the Service commitment to this important issue; and fulfilling the Youth in the Great Outdoors national initiative in our region.

As part of Connecting People with Nature: Ensuring the Future of Conservation initiative Whitson Elementary School students continue to benefit from various Schoolyard Habitat projects. Schoolyard Habitat continues to be highly supported by the I&E Office and Spring Creek NFH staff. Our office was awarded \$500 from the Connecting People with Nature Small Grants funding cycle



to purchase new signs for the various gardens, in addition to garden tools and wheelbarrows.



Whitson Elementary School recognized the I&E Manager and Assistant at a Salmon Fountain dedication ceremony in May. The art teacher received a Confluence Project grant to construct a fountain water feature. The fountain theme was salmon and their interconnectedness to everything. Our staff assisted in specialized learning around the building of the fountain. Students designed, built and decorated the fountain. The dedication was held in conjunction with 4th grade promotion with over 250 parents

in attendance. The fountain is located in the Native Pollinator Garden, which is part of the larger Schoolyard Habitat Project, of which we play an active role. Many White Salmon artists came together to assist in this project, which is beautiful!

Salmon in the Classroom

I&E staff continue to be active and involved in area schools. Spring Creek NFH houses aquariums/chillers for loan to area schools for a Salmon in the Classroom program. This program provides an opportunity for students to rear salmon in their classroom. Participating teachers present a six week cross curriculum unit with assistance from I & E staff. Each aquarium/chiller is loaned out for a three to four month period twice a year for maximum utilization. In addition, several area schools have purchased their own aquarium/chillers to participate in this program. A total of 28 classrooms participated in this program for the 2011/2012 school year.

Partnerships are essential in the success of the Salmon in the Classroom program. We work closely with the various schools, the Yakama Nation Fisheries Program, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, Oregon State University 4-H Extension Program and the Underwood Conservation District to provide this valuable program to schools in Washington and Oregon on an annual basis.



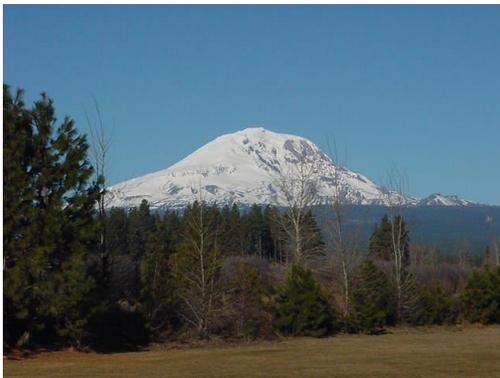
As part of the Salmon in the Classroom program, schools rearing salmon in the fall receive a hatchery tour of Carson, Little White Salmon or Spring Creek National Fish Hatcheries at the start of their unit. Schools that rear during the winter have their

hatchery tour at the culmination of their unit and tour either Little White Salmon or the Klickitat Hatchery. Various other tours occur during the year as requested. I&E staff also visit mid-Columbia Region classrooms to provide a series of hands-on educational activities. Fashion-A-Fish is an adaptation lesson designed to allow students the opportunity to create their own unique fish and develop an appropriate habitat. Fish dissection explores internal and external anatomy of salmon. To enhance the Land and Water required curriculum by Washington State, watershed model presentations augment learning about watershed health, forest ecology and the importance of healthy ecosystems to salmon. In addition, many classes request talks about the history of the Columbia River fishery and associated declines in salmon populations.

Stream Surveys

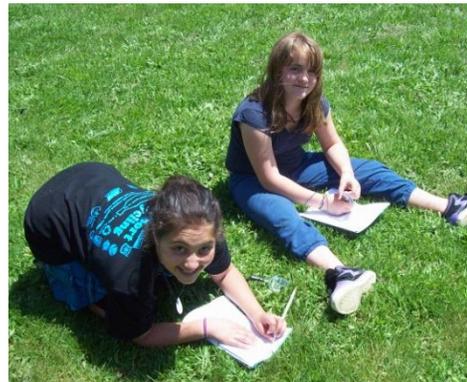
I&E staff continue to assist area schools with Adopt-A-Stream and Watershed Health projects. They assist Whitson Elementary fourth graders with water quality monitoring of Jewett Creek each month. Wind River Middle School, Outdoor Education class enters its tenth year of watershed assessments of the Wind River. These students are performing an extensive monitoring project at the former Hemlock Lake site in Stabler, WA. Students monitor stream flow, stream profile, macro-invertebrates, water quality and riparian vegetation. This is a fabulous opportunity for students to monitor Trout Creek, formerly Hemlock Lake which was formed in 1913 by the construction of Hemlock Dam. The USFS removed Hemlock Dam in the summer of 2009. Our office, USFS, COE and UCD provide in-class learning about watersheds, the importance of healthy streams and how this affects salmon in our region. Students have an in-class introduction, two field days and a final wrap-up field day for this unique learning experience.

Outdoor Learning Days

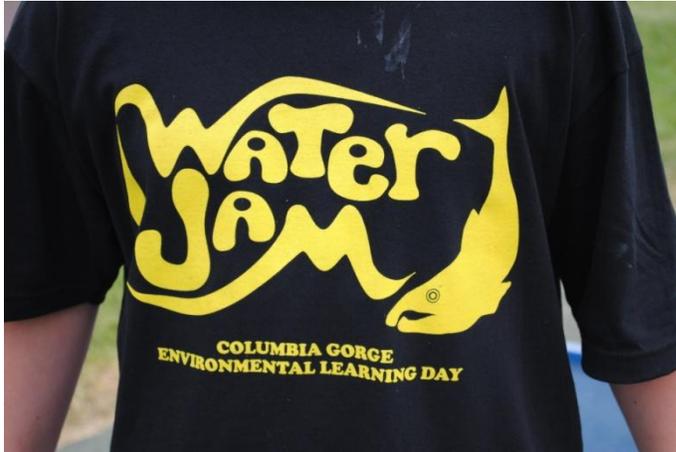


A seven year partnership between Conboy Lake National Wildlife Refuge and the I&E Office provided an outdoor learning experience for over 100 second grade students from Whitson Elementary School. *Conboy Lake Field Day* provided a hike where students took a closer look at forest and aquatic habitats and a larger wetland ecosystem.

The eighth annual *Bass Lake Field Day* inspired over 100 Kindergarteners from Whitson Elementary in spring 2012. This unique learning experience provides hands on activities in stream, forest and meadow ecosystems. Students culminate the day at Bonneville Dam to view



returning salmon and complete activity books for reinforced learning. This is a partnership between USFWS, COE and Whitson Elementary School. The same curriculum is utilized for Camp Wa-Ri-Ki (a Skamania County residential camp) presented to 75 fifth graders from Carson Elementary.



Water Jam continued into its fourth year with over 450 students attending at the Underwood Community Center. This water themed event is a culmination of the Salmon in the Classroom program offered throughout the gorge. Funding for this event comes mainly from Klickitat County Solid Waste, the U.S. Forest Service, Friends of Northwest Hatcheries and Discover Your Northwest. Various other

agencies and non-profit groups make this valuable outdoor learning day possible. Recycled pop-bottle T-shirts are provided to all students in addition to an amazing lunchtime concert by Portland based Recycle Man and the Dumpster Divers. Seeing all the Water Jam T-shirts walking around these small communities for years to come really leaves a positive, lasting impression on the people of these communities.

Other Educational Opportunities

The White Salmon River Experiential Learning Project was a learning opportunity for students in the local area to learn about Condit Dam and Northwestern Lake prior to and after its removal in October 2011.



The goal of this project was to provide a science-based, locally relevant, experiential education program focused on removal of Condit Dam. Various learning opportunities were available to interested teachers, including:

- Field trips to Condit Dam facilities and Northwestern Lake co-led by dam owner. Bussing costs were paid for by grant funding.
- In-class presentations on the past, present and future of the White Salmon River and Condit Dam.

- Water quality monitoring and habitat surveys – both before and after- dam removal.
- After dam removal we will facilitate habitat restoration opportunities, where students and volunteers can help re-plant the newly exposed riverbanks to help stabilize sediments and increase riparian cover.
- Condit Dam removal awareness booth at community events.
- Culmination of grant with the “Opening of the White Salmon” parade in conjunction with the White Salmon Art and Wine Fusion, July 2012.



Our goal was to provide information to engage and support the students in analytical thinking about the important questions surrounding removal of Condit Dam and other natural resource issues.

Presentations presented a balanced view of the choices and compromises involved in natural resource decisions and dam removal. Presentations included socio-economic and cultural issues, as well as topics in engineering, hydrology, fisheries and water resources. Presentations were tailored to the needs and interests of individual schools, teachers, grade levels and curricula to help support grade-level learning goals.

This project was funded by a Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund grant, administered by the Yakama Nation Fisheries Program in partnership with Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Archery as an Outreach Tool!



Both the I & E Manager and Assistant attended the National Conservation Training Center sponsored training for archery. Archery as an outreach tool is an outdoor conservation education program focusing on interactions with people and wildlife. It teaches students how to interact with the natural world by developing basic skills of archery. It also teaches an appreciation of what is around them and enhances their encounters with the outdoors. Both

ladies are certified Basic Archery Instructor Trainers as part of the National Archery in the Schools Program. By attending the training, both received a complete archery kit

(targets, bows, arrows, posters, safety gear). Archery was implemented at Mill A School as part of the fourth through eighth grade P.E. curriculum. It was successful and the school had very positive feedback about the program. The team plans to bring this exciting opportunity to various other schools and special interest groups in the coming year.



River Camp, a week long teacher training was offered in August 2012 in partnership with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Vancouver to 25 area teachers. Educators traveled to various sites throughout the gorge gaining a better understanding of salmon, energy, wetlands and formation of the gorge.

Other education programs developed and offered this year include: Macro-invertebrate in-class study in preparation for the Conboy Lake NWR field days, flower anatomy lesson to enhance Whitson Elementary first grade New Plants unit, a salmon life cycle lesson presented at Bambinos Bilingual Learning Center in Hood River, OR and New Vision School in Parkdale, OR.

The Lewis and Clark Learning Trunk remains in use throughout the school year and into the summer with special camps. This trunk traveled to five schools offering more than 250 students historical learning opportunities.

Special Events



Americans with Disabilities Act-Compliant Fishing Area Access Ramp Dedication

The ADA Fishing Ramp on Drano Lake was constructed due to the limited bank fishing areas upstream of Bonneville Dam. Recognizing the potential for wheel chair access and enhanced fishing opportunities for the elderly and disabled, hatchery staff initiated discussions with Service Diversity & Civil Rights staff, and staff from the State of Washington Recreation & Conservation Office. A concept for providing access to “everyone” having a desire to fish at this site was

developed. The site was officially dedicated on July 19, 2012.

United Cerebral Palsy Fishing Day



On August 14, 2012 thirty folks from United Cerebral Palsy of Oregon and Southwest Washington came to the Little White Salmon NFH for a fun day of fishing and touring. The newly dedicated ADA Fishing Ramp and Platform was put into full use for fishing. The weather was gorgeous and this group thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Before and after fishing the groups toured the

facility to view spring Chinook spawning. They also enjoyed a perfect August picnic lunch complete with watermelon!

Paralyzed Veterans of America Go Fishing!

Members of the Paralyzed Veterans of America spent an overcast, yet beautiful day on Drano Lake at the Little White Salmon NFH in Cook, WA. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife issued a one day group fishing permit, and it's a good thing because some fall Chinook were snagged by the group! We are pleased that our ADA fishing platform is being put to good use!



Condit Dam Breach



Condit Dam breach.
Photo credit: National Geographic

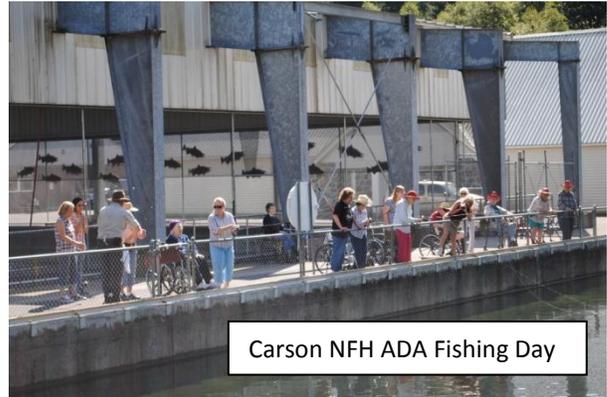
Condit Dam, a PacifiCorps operated hydro-electric dam on the White Salmon River completed in 1913, was breached on October 26, 2011. As a supporter and signer of the Settlement Agreement, the USFWS hosted a dam breaching event at Spring Creek NFH to commemorate the event, in partnership with the Yakama Nation and Friends of Northwest Hatcheries. Lunch and cake was served to over 65 attendees while watching the breach live via video feed.

Fishing Days

The Carson NFH sponsors an ADA Fishing Day and a Kid's Fishing Day each September. These are wonderful days filled with excitement and enthusiasm for fishing! This long tradition has been going on for 14 years and is well known and accepted in the community. In addition, we are a co-sponsor for the U.S. Forest Service annual Kid's Fishing Derby and Education Day in Trout Lake, WA. We sponsor a fishing identification pond and provide fish cleaning for the young anglers.

I&E Office Annual Events include:

- 14th Annual Carson NFH Disabled Fishing Day (60 contacts)
- 14th Annual Carson NFH Kid's Fishing Day (700 contacts)
- Benton County Salmon Summit, Richland, WA (500 contacts)
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Salmon Days (200 contacts)
- Hood River County Fair, Odell, OR (300 contacts)
- HUGS (Health and Safety) Fair, White Salmon, WA (500 contacts)
- Skamania County Health/Fitness Fair (50 contacts)
- Spring Creek NFH Open House (250 contacts)
- Trout Lake Community Fair, Trout Lake, WA (100 contacts)
- Trout Lake U.S. Forest Service Free Fishing Day (400 visitors)
- Water Jam '11 (450 contacts)
- Wenatchee River Salmon Festival, Leavenworth, WA (1000 contacts)



Information

The Columbia Gorge National Fish Hatcheries websites meet the required Pacific Region Website Content Accuracy and Accountability standards.

Website usage reports are unavailable for this fiscal year due to a software change within the Department of the Interior. We look forward to using the more powerful web-trending tool Google Analytics for future reports.



The Carson, Little White Salmon and Spring Creek National Fish Hatcheries stepped into the social media scene and developed Facebook pages for their stations. These have been very successful tools to casually inform our

followers what is new and happening at our facilities. Not only can we report on all things salmon, but there is a bit of whimsy in highlighting other “wildlife” at our hatcheries. The response has been very positive and fun for those involved.

I&E Manager and Spring Creek Manager continued to inform district Congressmen in Washington and Oregon and area County Commissioners about hatchery issues (ie. mass marking, Mitchell Act, hatchery reform/operations, sport and tribal fisheries etc.).

Area media continue their support of hatchery programs and events through public service announcements, news stories and photos.

The I&E Manager is part of a National Conservation Training Center workgroup developing an online Volunteer Training.

The I&E Manager remains active on the Columbia River Gorge Visitor Association as a board member and attends monthly meetings.

The I&E Manager participates in bi-monthly Connecting People with Nature Regional Team conference calls.

The I&E Manager has been actively involved on a regional workgroup working on compiling and disseminating information on the Infectious Salmon Anemia Virus and Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus in salmon.

The I&E Manager offered assistance to Eagle Creek and Warm Springs NFH as needed in an ongoing effort to offer complete and quality programming to the public.

I&E and hatchery staff continue to support Jewett Creek Streamkeepers, White Salmon River Management Committee, Wind River Technical Advisory Committee, and Wind River Watershed Council meetings.

I&E staff continue to photo document the area around the Big White Pond facility on the White Salmon River. Three photo stations are located in the vicinity of the facility. Photos are taken in the spring and fall each year and randomly when significant weather events occur.

I&E Manager creates and distributes the annual Columbia Gorge Outreach Notes in conjunction with Hatchery Data Sheets created by the Columbia River Fisheries Program Office. These informational documents are mailed electronically each fall to over 80 recipients.

Hatchery Improvements

The Carson NFH Visitor Contact Station interpretive panels and design was awarded to 1+2 Design Inc. The interpretive panels were completed and installed in June 2012. The building is beautiful and the interpretive displays accomplish exactly what they were intended to do. Inform visitors of hatchery operations, hatchery history, Gifford Pinchot National Forest and the Mt. St. Helen's National Volcanic Monument. The contact station was staffed by volunteers this past summer, providing visitor information and tours from May – September.



The Little White Salmon NFH devoted funding to improving Visitor Services at the hatchery. Several meetings took place to establish a direction and interpretive focus for the facility. We are working with Region One Visitor Services to develop a comprehensive plan for the hatchery. Quatrafoil Inc. was awarded a \$10,000 contract for developing a Hatchery Site Plan and design. \$50,000 was awarded to Ivie Design for interpretive planning, design, illustration and fabrication of new exhibits at the hatchery.



Spring Creek NFH Visitor Facility Enhancement Interpretive Trail was completed in August 2012. The contract was awarded to P.F. Pepiot Inc. who performed trail construction through the winter and early spring. They completed construction of the kiosk by early spring. The interpretive panels were subcontracted to Ivie Design and were completed and installed in July. The trail is a huge asset to the hatchery, providing a serene place to walk along the river and enjoy a quiet moment. Native plants were put



in by the hatchery in early spring as part of mitigating for the trail parking.

Volunteers

Youth Conservation Crew

A Youth Conservation Crew (YCC) from Conboy Lake NWR was once again loaned to the Complex for a week during July 2012. The four person crew plus crew leader provided valuable assistance to the Complex on a variety of projects. The majority of their labor assisted us with the loading of oyster shells into our biological reuse filter beds at the Spring Creek NFH. In addition, the crew did invasive weed removal along the shoreline at the hatchery.

Skamania County Forest Youth Success (FYS) Program

Little White Salmon, Spring Creek and Willard National Fish Hatcheries were fortunate to have Skamania County Forest Youth Success crews working on station during the summer 2012.



Spring Creek NHF hosted several FYS crews for an oyster shell loading project. Oyster shells provide a medium for bacteria to grow in our biological filter re-use ponds at the hatchery. The crews provided enormous amounts of hard work to complete the loading, leveling and cleanup that this job requires. At completion there were approximately 720 cubic yards of oyster shell loaded in (remaining 180

cu.yds. were reserved for future use). For reference the 900 cu. yds. of oyster shell took 23 full semi-truck dump-trailer loads to be delivered.

FYS at Willard NFH property and adjoining right of ways:

- Brush & tree clearing along entrance road: ½ mile
- Improvement of trail around housing loop: ½ mile
- Clearing of debris from winter ice storm and piling of ladder fuels in forest surrounding 6 residences.

Cutting and removal of noxious weeds: Across 80 acres encompassing numerous species including but not limited to Canada Thistle, Scotch Broom, St. Johnswort, Tansy Ragwort, and Oxeye Daisy. Actual acreage of noxious weeds removed is estimated at two.



During the summer, two FYS crews provided much needed help to the staff at Little White Salmon NFH. An approximate 140 cubic yards of debris that resulted from the winter storms was cleaned up and hauled away from the facility's entrance road and housing area. The crew also helped install two sets of stairs at the facility that will provide Little White Salmon staff safe access to the domestic water chlorination building and the outfall of the

facility's effluent water. Finally, approximately 4,000 sq. ft. of administrative and visitor parking area was cleaned and got a fresh coat of paint!

Hatchery Hosts

Carson NFH hosted two Hatchery Hosts for summer 2012. The Carson and I&E Managers both provide orientation and supervise the Hatchery Hosts. Barbara Brown, a long time federal volunteer, lived at the hatchery from mid-May through mid-August providing tours, talks and information in the newly created Visitor Contact station. Will and Kathy Waldow volunteered at the hatchery from late June through September, providing grounds keeping, tours, talks and a variety of odd jobs. Hatchery Hosts are essential to the Carson NFH summer operations as the hosts provide Visitor Services that regular staff have limited time to assist with; and the grounds at the hatchery are very large and the hosts also provide invaluable service assisting with the grounds keeping.

Fish Culture Volunteers

To assist with spawning and to allow Regional Office employees a valuable field experience, we once again coordinated hands-on educational day-trips to the hatchery. About 15 people from various Regional Office Departments – Human Resources, Division of Budget and Finance, Refuges, Fisheries, and several Regional Office High School interns from the Portland area schools came out to assist with some facet of spawning. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the chance to see what we do and appreciated the opportunity.



Mount Hood Community College's aquaculture class participated in spawning operations in September. Twenty-eight students had the opportunity to experience all phases of the operation from sorting fish, collecting eggs to washing and placing eggs into incubators.