

Columbia Gorge Information and Education Office



Fiscal Year 2013 Annual Report

The Columbia Gorge Information and Education Office (I&E) increases public awareness of fish and wildlife through expanded community outreach efforts and on-site visits. The I&E staff 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 and partners 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 increase 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

**Friends of Northwest
Hatcheries**



and Spring Creek NFH Open Houses with their annual \$200 contribution per station to purchase supplies and refreshments. The I&E Specialist 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
- Oregon State University 4-H Extension Office
- 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.



Spring 2013, gardens are prepped for planting

staff.

A relationship between the elementary students and the Columbia High School Horticulture students was established this year. Horticulture students are coming to

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



Gardens are put to bed for the winter.



Whitson Elementary twice a year for work in the raised garden beds mentoring the first grade students. In the spring, the garden beds are prepped for planting by turning the soil, adding compost and weeding. In the fall, the garden beds are put to bed for the winter. Old plants were removed; the beds were covered with newspapers and topped off with compost. This partnership is highly successful. All first grade classes had an opportunity to assist in the gardens.



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 29 classrooms participated in this program for the 2012/2013 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.



Boise-Elliot students learn about watersheds.

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 Tribal 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.



Boise-Elliot Humboldt School salmon release.

Salmon in the Classroom made a debut in Portland Public Schools this past year! Working closely with staff from the Regional Office

Fisheries and Diversity and Civil Rights divisions, we were able to provide this fabulous classroom rearing opportunity to fourth grade students at Boise-Elliot Humboldt Elementary School. In addition to the in-class lessons, the entire group was able to travel to the Little White Salmon NFH for a day long field trip to release their fish into Drano Lake and then experience a tour of marking trailers at Spring Creek NFH.



Unique 'Get Outside' Opportunity!

A long time partnership with the U.S. Forest Service provided our office the unique opportunity to get kids outside this past winter. For years the Forest Service has paired up with the Oregon Nordic Ski Club and the Washington State School for the Blind to get visually impaired students outdoors skiing. We were able to jump on this teaching partnership by having our own Jennifer Rowlen get trained in the program and spend the day skiing with a blind student. What a benefit for all. This program gets blind kids outdoors

experiencing a sport they might otherwise never even try! Over 30 students spent the day skiing on Mt. Hood and then a unique interpretive program was presented in the evening about mammal winter ecology. This program was covered by Oregon Public Broadcasting and aired this past fall.

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. Working with the USFS we provide this class the opportunity to monitor the former Hemlock Lake, now free flowing

Trout Creek in the Wind River Drainage. Students perform a stream profile, vegetation survey, water quality inventory and amphibian assessment.

The White Salmon River Experiential Learning Project (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) 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. Annual water quality monitoring by Henkle Middle School 7th graders continues each spring.



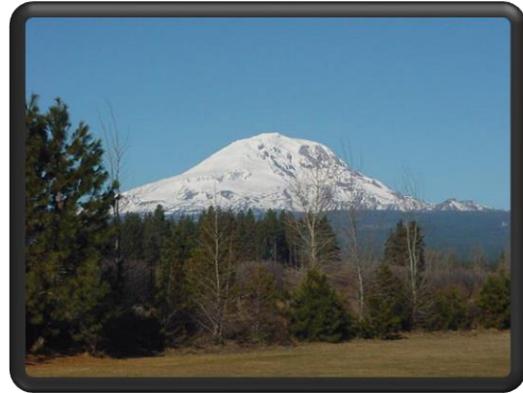
Henkle Middle School 7th graders test water quality of the White Salmon River.

Support is provided to other partners who perform stream assessments on their own. They borrow supplies and equipment to work independently with surveying nearby streams. Support

was provided to the Hood River Valley High School, Gorge Ecology Institute and Washington State Parks.

Outdoor Learning Days

An eight 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 ninth annual *Bass Lake Field Day* inspired over 100 Kindergarteners from Whitson Elementary in spring 2013. 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.

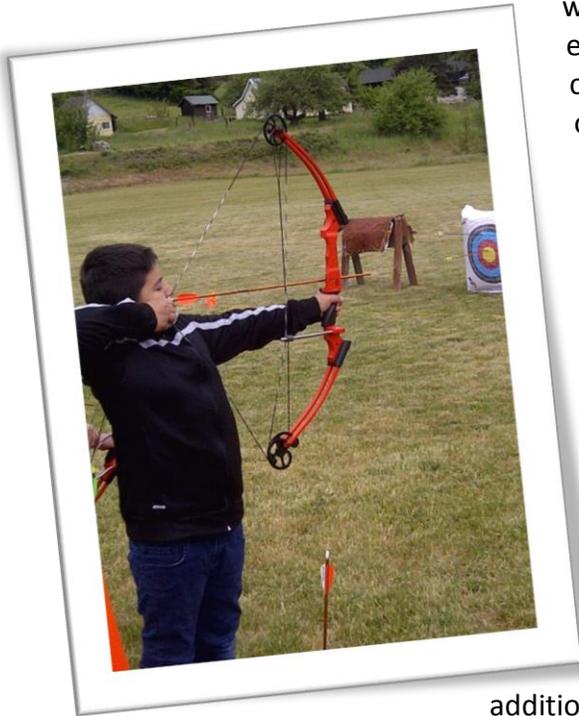


Water Jam continued into its fifth year with over 300 students attending at the Underwood Community Center. This water themed event is a culmination of the Salmon in the Classroom program offered throughout the gorge. Funding for this event comes mainly from Klickitat County Solid Waste, the U.S. Forest 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.

Archery as an Outreach Tool!

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.



In

addition

archery was a focus of the Henkle Middle School (White Salmon, Washington) afterschool program. This 4-week outdoor unit was offered in May when the weather warmed up. Archery was also provided as a summer school supplement as a 4-week unit for this same school.

Carson Elementary was introduced to archery at their annual Outdoor School in June. Over 65 fifth graders learned the technique and art of archery. This was thoroughly enjoyed by the kids in the perfect outdoor setting of Camp Wa-Ri-Ki on

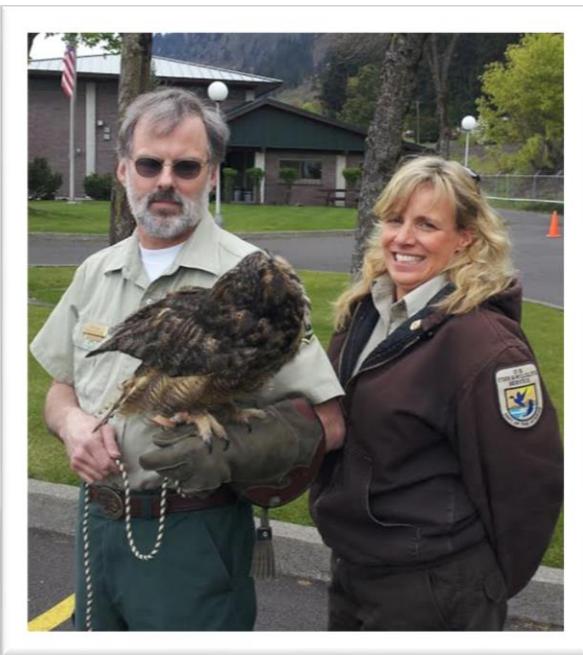


the Washougal River in Skamania County.

Archery was enjoyed by 4-H campers at Camp Morrow south of The Dalles, Oregon as part of their summer camp opportunities. This is a learning partnership between USFWS and the Oregon State University 4-H Extension program.

Lastly, archery was a hands-on activity at the Cathlapotle Plankhouse Traditional Hunting Family Day in August in partnership with the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. Over 100 visitors learned all about different forms of traditional hunting, where archery was just one of many events.

Other Education Opportunities



An owl program has been developed in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service. Jennifer Rowlen provides owl pellet dissections and natural history information, while Ron Kikel with the USFS has a live Great Horned Owl, Jack, he brings into schools for presentations. This has become a very popular offering among area schools.

River Camp, a week long teacher training was offered in August 2013 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; and Storytime with a Ranger was also provided on a monthly basis for Mill A School kindergarten through third grades on various topics.

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

CAST for Kids

It takes many hands to pull off successful and meaningful events. The Catch a Special Thrill (CAST) for Kids event was just that. A very meaningful event last July brought many partners, USFWS employees and a group of fisherman together to make a special fishing experience for all. Deputy Regional Directory Richard Hannan took the time to capture his thoughts on this momentous day:

Not long ago, I went fishing. This is a pretty unremarkable thing for me; I enjoy the quiet reflection that fishing brings and, while I am no great angler, I get out as often as I can in hopes of relaxing and catching a fish or two. But this most recent fishing trip was different. It was, in fact, perhaps the best fishing experience one could hope for. Did I land a record-breaking fish? Not even close. Did I discover a secret fishing hole and haul them in by the dozens? Far from it. I actually didn't catch a single fish (although I was pretty handy with the net). I caught something much bigger – a group of future fisherman.

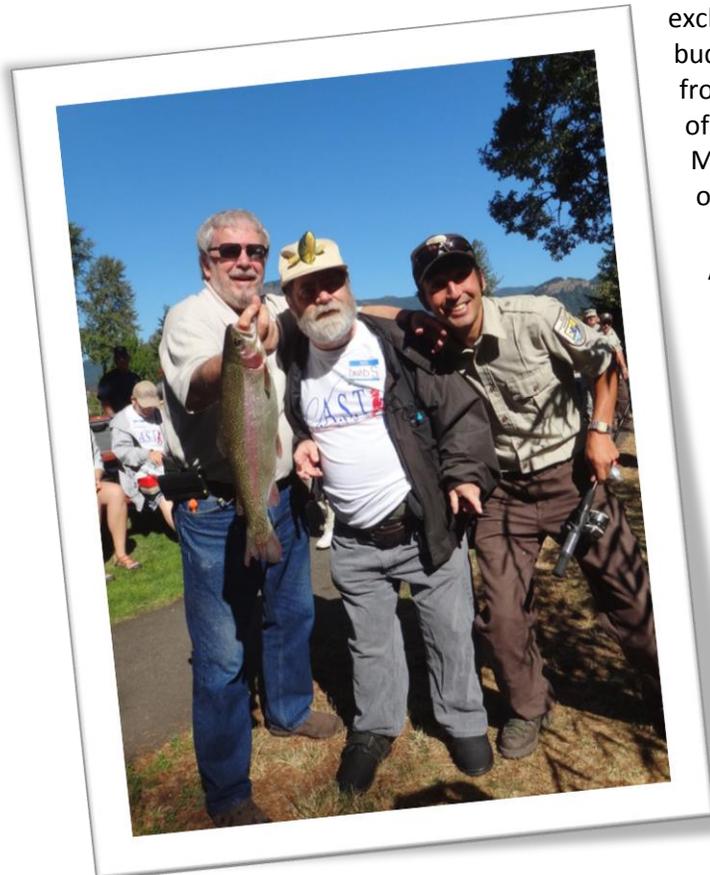


Enthusiasm was a contagious thing at Bonneville Hatchery two Fridays ago. As summer sun glinted off of rows of meticulously baited fishing poles and the wind whipped through the trees, it was tough to say who was more excited – the hundreds of hungry trout jumping in the small pond or the dozens of members from the United Cerebral Palsy of Oregon and Southwest Washington (UCP) who came to fish as part of Disabled Free Fishing Day put on by CAST, The USFWS, The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and Kiwanis Club.



Excited yells and high-fives echoed around the Hatchery as anglers of all experience levels landed fish left and right. Fish were held up with pride and a spirit of good-natured competition began to take hold as fish were compared. “This is my first time and I know I got the biggest fish!”

exclaimed one of my new fishing buddies, David, who took a break from reeling ‘em in to take a photo of his catch with Dana Perez and Matt Stinson from USFWS (photo on left)

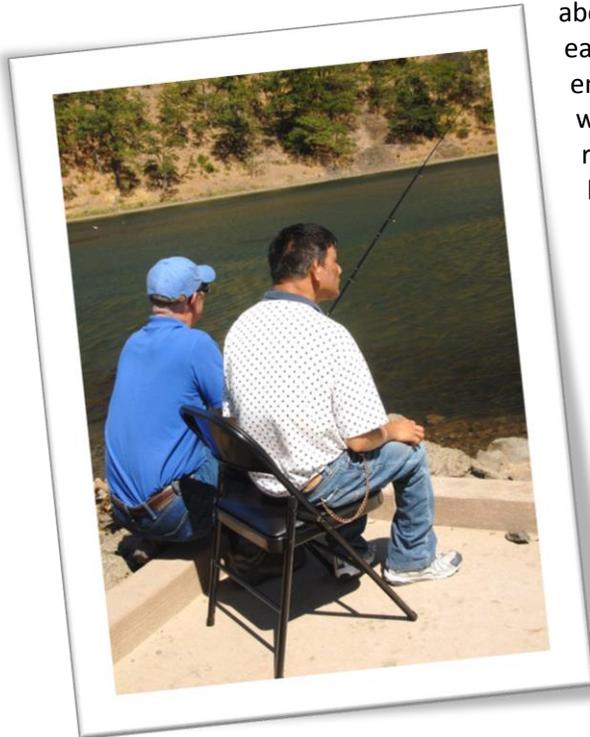


As the CASTing continued, I was also able to reconnect with old fishing friends like Mark, a UCP member who attends many of our fishing events and lend his skills and smiles to less experienced group members (Mark and I are in the group photo above at the far right). Mark laughs as he lands a trout seconds after his bait hits the water and we joke that our luck wasn’t quite this good last year at our Drano Lake fishing day (see photo below). But fish or no fish, Mark’s grin and his passion for being outdoors never dims. For him, as for the rest of us, fishing is a way to connect. Regardless of skill or ability, we are able to connect with

nature, with each other, and, if we are lucky, with a fish or two.

Like any other fishermen, this group cleaned their catches, baited their hooks, and told fish tales about who landed the biggest fish. They celebrated each and every catch. The tug of a bite on was enough to elicit cheering and each fisherman's catch was a victory for the group. This was not the solitary, reflective state in which I usually fish. This was better. I may have been part of first fishing experiences for some in this group but they enabled me to experience the *joy* of fishing. And that is a feeling that should be available to all of us.

Richard Hannan
Deputy Regional Director



Fishing Days

The Carson NFH sponsors an Americans with Disabilities Act 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 15 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:

- 15th Annual Carson NFH Disabled Fishing Day (60 contacts)
- 15th Annual Carson NFH Kid's Fishing Day (600 contacts)
- Benton County Salmon Summit, Richland, WA (500 contacts)



- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Salmon Days (200 contacts)
- Spring Creek NFH Open House (225 contacts)
- Trout Lake Community Fair, Trout Lake, WA (100 contacts)
- Trout Lake U.S. Forest Service Free Fishing Day (400 visitors)
- Water Jam '13 (350 contacts)
- Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge Plankhouse Days (100 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 continue to highlight their stations through active Facebook pages. These are successful tools to casually inform followers what is new and happening at our facilities.

I&E Specialist and hatchery managers continue 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 Specialist is part of a National Conservation Training Center workgroup developing an online Volunteer Training.

The I&E Specialist remains active with the Columbia River Gorge Visitor Association and attends monthly meetings.

The I&E Specialist participates in monthly Connecting People with Nature Regional Team conference calls. She is coordinating, facilitating and note-taking for these meetings for FY 14.

The I&E program offers 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 Specialist creates and distributes the annual Columbia Gorge Outreach Notes and Hatchery Data Sheets, with input from the Columbia River Fisheries Program Office. These informational documents are mailed electronically each winter to over 80 recipients.

Hatchery Improvements

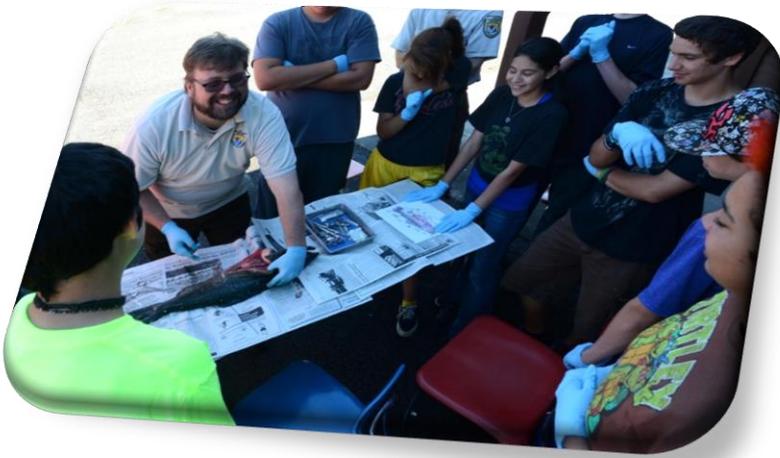


The Little White Salmon NFH now has a fabulous new interactive visitor center. Several meetings aimed at improving visitor services took place to establish a direction and interpretive focus for the facility. We are working with Region One Visitor Services to develop a comprehensive plan for the hatchery. 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. Hatchery exhibits were completed September 30, 2013. Phase 2 of the project will be implemented in FY14.

Volunteers

Youth Conservation Crew (YCC)

Due to sequestration, no YCC crews were hired this year.



Hatchery manager, Steve Wingert, performs a fish dissection as part of the crew's education day.

Skamania County Forest Youth Success (FYS) Program

Forest Youth Success crews in Skamania county provided work on various projects throughout the Columbia River Gorge National Fish Hatchery (NFH) Complex this summer. Three different work crews provided service at the Little White Salmon, Spring Creek and Willard NFHs. The Complex is devoted to this program as it provides much needed assistance to our facilities,

but also provides these students with valuable work experiences at varying locations.

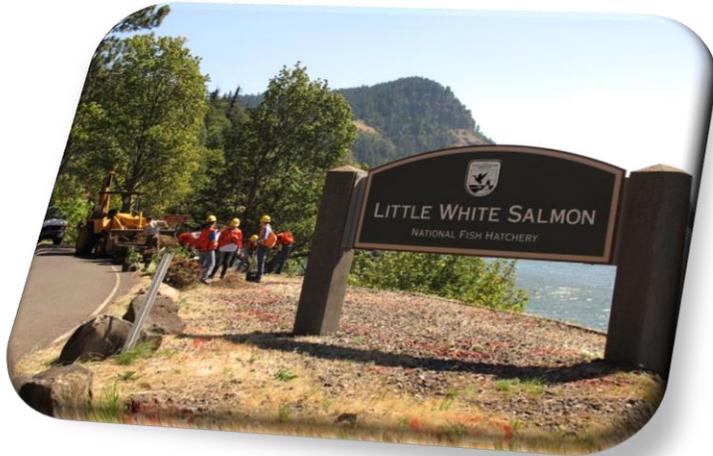
The following activities were undertaken by the FYS crews across the 80 acre Willard National Fish Hatchery property and adjoining right of ways.

- Improvement of fire break trail around housing loop
- 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, Japanese knotweed, and Oxeye Daisy
- Maintenance (scraping and cleaning) of right of way to domestic water springs to insure healthy water supply of small community water system
- Fence boundary maintenance
- property line maintenance



Forest Youth Success crew removed invasive species at Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery

A work crew spent one day removing invasive False Indigo along the interpretive trail at the Spring Creek National Fish Hatchery.



Forest Youth Success workers plant native species around the entrance sign for the hatchery.

Little White Salmon National Fish Hatchery:

- Over 4 days, 2 crews planted much needed native vegetation at the entrance sign. They also cleared brush and removed invasive Himalayan blackberry, painted two out buildings and two picnic tables.

Hatchery Hosts

Carson NFH hosted one set of Hatchery Hosts for summer 2013. We anticipated having another host couple but they had to cancel last minute due to health issues. The Carson and I&E Managers provide orientation and supervision to the Hatchery Hosts. Evy Orlob and Jack Weekly worked July 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. 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.