

Podcast Title: Quilcene National Fish Hatchery: 100 Years of Making a Difference

Introduction:

[music: 'Acadia,' via Royalty-free music @ incompetech.com]

NARRATOR: Nestled along Highway 101 within a narrow, deeply forested valley along the western shores of Washington State's Hood Canal, the Quilcene National Fish Hatchery is one of three national fish hatcheries on the Olympic Peninsula operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

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History

[music: 'Olde Timey,' via Royalty-free music @ incompetech.com]

[NARRATOR] This month Quilcene National Fish Hatchery celebrates its 100 year anniversary. In 1903, Representative Fred Hastings introduced a bill calling for the establishment of a fish hatchery on the Big Quilcene River. Construction of the facility wasn't completed until 1911 -- at a cost of \$16,700, nearly eight years after Hasting's original bill. In 1925, the facility first received electricity, which enabled the hatchery to pump water and chill incubating eggs. In those early days, Quilcene produced fall chum, coho, steelhead, and Chinook salmon, largely to support local salmon canning industries.

Over the years, the hatchery has produced many species including resident trout, Chinook, coho, sockeye, steelhead, chum, and kokanee.

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Quilcene Coho production:

[music: 'Bright Wish,' via Royalty-free music @ incompetech.com]

[NARRATOR] Today, Quilcene National Fish Hatchery annually produces over a million coho salmon eggs and fry that support tribal and commercial fishing industries as well as recreational fishing. These fishing opportunities provide significant economic benefits in the United States and Canada and also provide significant cultural value, particularly for several area tribes.

Coho, or 'silver,' salmon are big fish; - second only in size to Chinook, or 'king,' salmon in the Pacific salmonid family. They weigh about 7 pounds when fully mature and average between 10 and 32 inches in length. Renowned for their aggressive nature in

saltwater and leaping ability when returning to their home rivers or streams, coho like other salmon are vulnerable to poor water quality, ocean conditions and overfishing.

Each year the Hatchery releases 400,000 yearling coho directly into the Quilcene River. Like all juvenile Pacific salmon, these coho will spend their time in the river 'imprinting,' or learning, the unique, freshwater chemical smell of the River prior to migrating to the Pacific Ocean.

The Hatchery obtains the eggs it needs for its coho program by collecting 750 male and 750 female adults that return to the hatchery every fall. Any excess, or 'surplus' fish that the Hatchery doesn't need for spawning are provided to area tribes for subsistence and ceremonial use.

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Working With Tribes

[music: 'Birch Run,' via Royalty-free music @ incompetech.com]

[NARRATOR] The relationship between Quilcene and area tribes is an integral part of the hatchery programs. The Service works closely with the Point No Point tribes (Port Gamble S' Klallam tribe, Jamestown S' Klallam tribe), Skokomish tribe, Lower Elwha Klallam tribe, Suquamish tribe, Skokomish tribe, and Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission to accomplish harvest, conservation objectives, habitat restoration, and monitoring of fish populations.

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Conserving Imperiled Summer Chum and Winter Steelhead:

[music: 'Revival,' via Royalty-free music @ incompetech.com]

[NARRATOR] In addition to producing fish for harvest, the Quilcene hatchery is also active in producing fish to help conserve and recover species. Over the past two decades the hatchery has actively engaged in efforts include to rebuild local runs of Summer Chum salmon and Winter Steelhead.

In Washington's Hood Canal, summer chum numbers became alarmingly low in the early '90s as a result of overfishing and habitat loss. Summer chum are unique in that though they are strong swimmers, they don't seem able to jump as well as other salmon. This deters them from overcoming obstacles, and thus they tend to spawn in lower portions of the river.

Beginning in 1993, Quilcene National Fish Hatchery became involved in a large-scale program to take the harvest pressure off of wild chum by providing supplemental, hatchery-raised fish. Working with NOAA Fisheries, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's Western Washington Office, Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, and the tribes, Quilcene staff collected eggs from chum that were incidentally captured during coho fishing. The hatchery incubated eggs and reared juvenile fish until they were ready for release in areas where summer chum were considered most at risk. Twelve years later, in 2005, the program ended in success: chum populations had rebounded from single digit numbers of returning adults to their home stream to tens of thousands. To this day, Quilcene staff still participate in monitoring and habitat improvement efforts to benefit summer chum population, and ensure program successes continue.

In 2007, a program was initiated at Quilcene hatchery to aid Hood Canal Winter Steelhead, a species listed as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act. The hatchery assists with early rearing of steelhead, which involves taking eggs that can be safely handled from fish egg nests, known as "redds," out of the stream and to the hatchery. While on station the eggs are cleaned and placed in an incubator, which mirrors stream temperatures and conditions. When the eggs hatch and the fish are ready to feed, the fry are placed into rearing tanks. Once large enough, the growing fish are transferred to a hatchery in Lilliwaup, Washington, run by salmon restoration group Long Live the Kings. Here the steelhead will be reared in large tanks until they are about two years of age. They will then be released into the river to spawn, supplementing depressed wild populations.

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Outreach:

[music: 'Midday Dance,' via Royalty-free music @ incompetech.com]

[NARRATOR] Quilcene National Fish Hatchery also participates in community-oriented outreach that allow hatchery staff to interact with local communities about what the hatchery does, and most importantly share the overall role of fish hatcheries through hands on learning experiences.

Quilcene allows visitors into the Hatchery year-round. During fall spawning, guided tours are commonly provided to groups and schools to highlight different stages of salmon spawning, from egg collection to incubation.

One of the most unique outreach activities that take places at the hatchery is the art of Gyotaku. Gyotaku is a traditional Japanese process which was used in the mid 19th century by fishermen to record their catches. Today, it has become more of an art form, and is especially popular with youth.

The word Gyotaku is made up of the Japanese terms Gyo which means “fish” and taku which means “rubbing.” This term describes a process in which fish bodies are painted and paper is then pressed against the painted fish scales. When the wax paper is removed, what is left is a beautifully colorful and intricate replica of the fish. Quilcene often works with student and youth groups to teach this process and let young artists create their very own Gyotaku pieces.

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Volunteers:

[music: ‘Heartwarming,’ via Royalty-free music @ incompetech.com]

[NARRATOR] Quilcene also works with community volunteers who work alongside hatchery employees and perform many hatchery tasks. They help conduct hatchery tours and often work outside the hatchery in the community giving presentations to schools and groups. From small-scale projects like beautifying the flower garden around the Hatchery’s entrance sign to larger scale activities like working directly with employees in daily fish care and preservation, the volunteers at Quilcene National Fish Hatchery play an important role.

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The Future

[music: ‘Water Droplets,’ via Royalty-free music @ incompetech.com]

[NARRATOR] The Hatchery will continue to work with its numerous partners raising and releasing coho salmon and work with imperiled species.

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