

About the Clatsop County Fisheries Department

Who are we and where are we located?

The Clatsop County Fisheries Project office is located at 2001 Marine Drive, Rm 253, in Astoria, in the Oregon State University Seafood Research and Education Center.

Please feel free to call us or come by and ask for a free tour of our project. Visitors interested in the program are welcome to stop by during business hours 8 a.m-4 p.m, or contact us at 503-325-6452. We can also be reached by email at [spmeshke \[at\] co.clatsop.or.us](mailto:spmeshke@co.clatsop.or.us)

Our Program

Today, most commercial and sport fish caught in the select areas are produced by the Fisheries Project and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's Klaskanine, Gnat Creek, Cascade, Sandy and Big Creek hatcheries. Fish raised and released by this program generated \$1.3 million to \$3.4 million ex-vessel dollars each year from 2000 through 2004 in commercial fish harvests. That value expands as it filters through the community, resulting in an impact of 441 jobs and \$12 million in personal income.

"The quality of the Youngs Bay spring Chinook is comparable, if not superior to, the fabled Copper River king salmon."

Michael Morrissey, Ph.D., director and professor
Oregon State University Seafood Laboratory

The Fisheries Project operates three estuarine net-pen sites in Youngs Bay, Tongue Point, and Blind Slough, and a hatchery and freshwater site on the South Fork of the Klaskanine River.

The program rears salmon from eggs and fry provided by hatcheries in the Columbia River basin.

Fingerlings are raised in innovative "net pens" and released to the Pacific Ocean as smolts. Because the fish are raised in net pens in the local water, the fish are imprinted to this area as home and return as adults to be harvested. Because the select areas are near the Pacific Ocean the fish caught in the bay are "ocean bright." See Net Pens.

In 2011, the project released 2.03 million Coho, 957,000 Spring Chinook, and 1.4 million bright Fall Chinook smolts.

The Fisheries Project is operated by the Clatsop County Natural Resources Division. Funding comes from Bonneville Power Administration through its Select Areas Fisheries Enhancement (SAFE) Project and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Commercial gillnetters also help fund the project by contributing a 5-percent voluntary assessment on the value of their catch, which is matched by the fish processors.

Effectiveness

Advantages of the program are:

- Cost of the program's harvested adult salmon is the least of any in the Columbia basin
- Harvest is conducted with extremely low impacts on 'listed' wild salmon
- Minimal straying of SAFE fish outside of Youngs Bay
- SAFE harvest benefits fishers in the ocean, lower Columbia River, and in the select area sites
- A high degree of collaboration between user groups and government at all levels

Leadership Role

The Clatsop County Fisheries program is recognized as a leader in technological development in fish culture. Many programs, from net-pen rearing, density studies, experimental sub-surface feeding, and predator avoidance experiments, have been conducted by the staff. A recent project in addressing recovery of naturally spawning salmon typifies the program's leadership role.

The South Fork Klaskanine facility previously diverted water for its rearing pond by a concrete dam and screening structure. Because it was deteriorating and out of compliance for established fish passage and screening, a multi-agency collaborative project to remove the dam and replace it with an innovative diversion and screening system was accomplished in 2007. The program is no longer viewed as preventing access to spawning and rearing habitat for natural spawning salmon, trout, and Pacific lamprey.

Project Funding

The SAFE-funded (select area fisheries enhancement) portion of Clatsop County Fisheries is a collaborative program that includes both Washington and Oregon's Departments of Fish and Wildlife and Clatsop County Fisheries. It receives funding from the Bonneville Power Administration as off-sight mitigation for the effects of dams and water withdrawals on the

Columbia River and its tributaries.

The program is part of the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. Of the \$1.8 million annual SAFE budget, Clatsop County Fisheries receives roughly \$400,000 per year. In addition, Clatsop County Fisheries contracts with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for \$200,000 per year to produce fish at its South Fork Klaskanine hatchery. That facility produces 1.5 million Fall Chinook and approximately 300,000 coho smolts per year.

The commercial fishers contribute 5 percent of the value of their catch to Clatsop County Fisheries from the 'select area fisheries' in the voluntary assessment program and the local processors match that amount. This is used as a 25-percent match for the state funds. Additional 'in-kind' donations to the program by the state include fish trucking, mass marking, coded wire tagging and tag recovery, as well as fish pathology support.

Benefit to Cost

A recent independent analysis of the select area fisheries by The Research Group indicates that the value of the harvest of salmon produced is nearly \$2 million to the fishers, and the regional impact is close to three times that amount. Over 440 jobs are a direct result of the program, the majority of which are in rural coastal communities.