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Construction begins on Yakima River salmon hatchery

**Joint news release:
Bonneville Power Administration
Yakama Indian Nation
Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
Northwest Power Planning Council**

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CLE ELUM, Wash. - A small plot of land in a fairly unknown location in eastern Washington will yield knowledge that could change the way salmon runs are restored.

Today's ceremony on the banks of the Yakima River near Cle Elum, Wash. celebrated the initial work on the Cle Elum Hatchery. The innovative hatchery is the capstone of the Yakima Fisheries Project to restore both habitat and spring chinook salmon in the Yakima River. Research conducted at the site will provide the foundation for hatchery operational standards into the next century.

The Bonneville Power Administration is funding the \$14-million hatchery as part of the Northwest Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Program. It is part of the Council's effort to mitigate for stock losses attributable to the hydropower uses of the federal dams in the Columbia Basin.

"We have been calling for this project, a hatchery for the Yakama Indian Nation, ever since our first Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program in 1982," said John Etchart, chairman and Montana representative on the Council. "At that time, the Council identified the Yakima Basin as having great potential for salmon and steelhead production."

Ross Sockzehigh, chairman of the Yakama Indian Nation said, "The Yakama Nation is exceedingly exhilarated to have construction underway. The many years coming are something to look forward to in replenishing the fish stocks in the Yakima River system."

The hatchery will provide a large-scale test of supplementation as a way to improve wild fish stocks. Supplementation uses innovative methods to rebuild natural production while minimizing the human intervention associated with conventional hatcheries. About 1,100 wild spring chinook will be captured to serve as brood stock. Adults will be held, eggs incubated and young reared at the hatchery. Half of the young salmon will be reared using conventional means. However, as part of an experiment, the other half will forage for food in a more natural setting than in a conventional hatchery. At the proper age, the young salmon will be moved to acclimation ponds where they will be "imprinted" on river water at the site to assure they will return to that area to spawn. Biologists will monitor and evaluate how well these fish enhance the natural population.

Adaptive management is a critical feature of the project. The effects of management actions will also be monitored and evaluated, and programs and facilities will be modified as necessary to achieve the project's objectives.

"BPA and the other project partners appreciate the support of the Yakima Basin community, including members of the Yakama Indian Nation and other local citizens," said Randy Hardy, BPA administrator. "This project has been carefully designed over the last 14 years with great concern for resident fish, as well as for human interests and practices." The project is a joint effort of the Yakama Indian Nation, Northwest Power Planning Council, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, BPA, local citizens and countless others.

Other speakers at the celebration included Rich Lincoln of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and John Dooley of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

Construction is expected to be complete by November 1996. The hatchery should be functional by mid-April 1997. By 2003, the hatchery should contribute between 3,200 and 6,500 adult spring chinook to the Yakima River Basin each year. Between 1991 and 1995, the run ranged from 4,569 to 663 returning adult fish.

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