Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission

NEWS

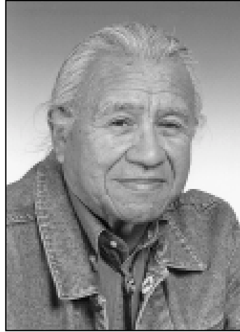
Vol. XIV No. 4
Winter 1999/2000

Inside:

- *Historic Shellfish Harvest*
- *U.S. Acquires Elwha Dams*
- *Recovery Plan Nearly Done*
- *Salvage Effort Builds Bridges*
- *Monitoring Shellfish Toxins*
- *Tribes Count On Crab*

You Are In The Driver's Seat

By Billy Frank Jr.
NWIFC Chairman



People need to slow down and look ahead.

For far too many people, contemporary society is depicted by the man who eats his fast-food breakfast, makes business calls, and shaves his whiskers — as he speedily drives his routine commute to the office.

While such an approach to life may seem efficient, it can actually be wasteful. Many of these drivers end up smacking into other cars and cutting their commutes short in the blink of an eye. More to the point, they don't slow down long enough to enjoy the beauty of the life they've been given.

This commuter depiction can apply to a contemporary farmer as easily as it can to an accountant or even a politician. We are all commuters – at least in the sense that we are all travelling from the past to the future, between generations and amid the milleniums.

Liken this to the current salmon controversy. People are so preoccupied with their daily business that they are blind to the car crash ahead. They are so tuned into protecting their own lifestyles, even at others' expense, that they are forgetting to consider the common future.

Uninhibited population growth combined with an insatiable appetite for instant wealth has caused many natural resources to dwindle. Yet the simple application of common sense beyond the next fiscal quarter clearly reveals that future prosperity is utterly dependent on healthy natural resources. Society has such a fixation on the daily business page that it's indifferent to the brake lights just ahead.

We Indians traditionally believe that decisions we make today should be based on the impact to the next seven generations. Today's society is so obsessed with its immediate "needs" that it is oblivious to what will happen in the next seven seconds. If this weren't the case, people would embrace the Endangered Species Act, and support its full implementation. They would learn about Indian treaties, and begin to understand that they are actually non-Indian treaties, as well. They would demand that all segments of society be fully accountable to the needs of salmon. They would understand that the future of their families is intertwined with the vitality of the natural world.

Will the crash be avoided? That remains to be seen. But a positive outcome is clearly dependent on whether or not the commuters in today's society choose to look forward and slow down enough to save their own lives.

On the cover: Suquamish councilman Mike Rodgers hunts for clams during the first commercial harvest by a tribe from private tidelands following rulings which upheld treaty shellfish rights. *Photo: D. Williams*

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission News

The NWIFC News is published quarterly on behalf of the treaty Indian tribes in western Washington by the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission, 6730 Martin Way E., Olympia, WA 98516. Complimentary subscriptions are available. Articles in NWIFC News may be reprinted.

Jamestown S'Klallam 360-683-1109
Lower Elwha Klallam 360-452-8471
Lummi 360-384-2210
Makah 360-645-2205
Muckleshoot 253-939-3311
Nisqually 360-456-5221
Nooksack 360-592-5176
Port Gamble S'Klallam ... 360-297-2646
Puyallup 253-597-6200
Quileute 360-374-6163
Quinault 360-276-8211
Sauk-Suiattle 360-436-0132
Skokomish 360-426-4232
Squaxin Island 360-426-9781
Stillaguamish 360-652-7362
Suquamish 360-598-3311
Swinomish 360-466-3163
Tulalip 360-651-4000
Upper Skagit 360-856-5501

News Staff: Tony Meyer, Manager, Information Services Division and South Puget Sound Information Officer (IO); Doug Williams, Strait/Hood Canal IO; Logan Harris, North Sound IO; Debbie Preston, Coastal IO; and Sheila McCloud, Editorial Assistant. For more information please contact: NWIFC Information Services at (360) 438-1180 in Olympia; (360) 424-8226 in Mount Vernon; (360) 297-6546 in Kingston; or (360) 374-5501 in Forks.

Visit the NWIFC Home Page on the World Wide Web at www.nwifc.wa.gov.

Suquamish Return To Traditional Site For Clam Harvest

In a lot of ways, the Suquamish Tribe's Feb. 15 clam harvest was like any other. Bundled against the cold, diggers clicked on their miner's headlamps to cut through the fast-approaching darkness and joked about who would fill the most sacks by night's end.

Unlike other digs, though, this one had enough media attention to give a politician stage fright. Three TV news crews and a throng of newspaper reporters and photographers spent two hours elbowing each other while gathering sound bites and video of what was the first commercial clam harvest by a tribe on private tidelands in decades.

The harvest was the first since a 1994 federal court decision restoring the tribes' treaty-reserved shellfish rights. Judge Edward Rafeedie ruled the tribes could harvest shellfish from all usual and accustomed places. His decision was upheld by a federal appellate court two years ago, and was denied a hearing by the U.S. Supreme Court last year, ending all legal challenges.

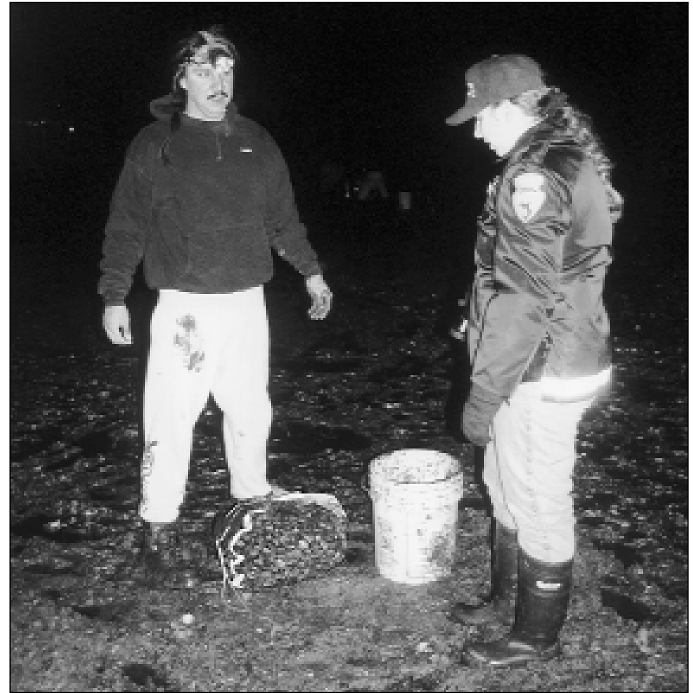
Ceremonial and subsistence harvests of shellfish have occurred on private beaches at least twice since the Rafeedie decision – one Hood Canal, and one on Hat Island near Everett. But the Suquamish's harvest of 1,600 pounds was a commercial dig for profit, and a licensed buyer was on the beach paying $1.20 per pound for the manila clams.

The dig took place at Erland's Point on Chico Bay in Kitsap County on about 400 feet of beach owned by several different families. Some of the landowners, including Robert and Sharon Tucker, watched with reporters and camera crews as the diggers came across Dyes Inlet on a tribal fishing boat, their arrival heralded by camera flashes and parka-wrapped reporters clamoring for interviews.

Sharon Tucker told reporters that she couldn't come up with a good reason for protesting the clam dig.

"I grew up here. But the Indians were here for centuries before my grandfather got here. How can anyone say, 'No?'" she said. "I think it's important for people to understand how much communication went on between the tribe and us as property owners (leading up to the harvest). They never came on our property. They always came by water, as they did tonight. They are very respectful of our privacy."

To the tribe, the harvest meant returning to a place where their ancestors had dug clams for thousands of years. It also meant income.



Janene Johnson, Suquamish Tribal Police, talks with digger Lewis George as she monitors an historic tribal shellfish harvest near Poulsbo. *Photo: D. Williams*

"I used to chase people out of there because it was so polluted," said Wayne George, the tribe's chief of police and its acting fisheries manager.

The Suquamish harvest was from a "relay" beach; that is, clams harvested from the beach couldn't be taken directly to market because of the possible presence of bacteria. Instead, the shellfish buyer had to put the shellfish on a clean beach on Hood Canal for two weeks to purge any bacteria from their systems.

Suquamish shellfish biologist Paul Williams, who organized the harvest, said he hopes the dig's media attention leads to improvements in the water quality of Dyes Inlet. There are 11 combined sewage overflows that can flush large amounts of sewage-tainted stormwater into the salt chuck near the entrance to Dyes Inlet.

"When it rains hard, there's too much volume for the system as it's designed and out it goes into Dyes Inlet," Williams said. The City of Bremerton was successfully sued and ordered to fix the problem, which will likely take about $18 million to correct. So far, about half of the funding has been allocated for the project.

He said the city is working to fix its sewage pump stations, plus other main infrastructure problems. "We're working very well with the city and all of the other stakeholders to get this situation solved."

"There are eight property owners from the Erland's Point area that we'll be harvesting from, but who knows how many others there are out there with shellfish on their beaches," Williams said. "The potential is quite enormous for this area – if we can get it all cleaned up." — *D. Williams*

In Latest Step Toward Removal

Federal Government Buys Elwha Dams

The decades-long struggle to tear down two fish-killing dams on the Elwha River took a giant leap in late February when the federal government officially purchased the structures.

A "commemorative declaration" recognizing the river and ecosystem restoration project was signed Feb. 11 by Lower Elwha Klallam tribal chairman Russ Hepfer, Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and the dams' owners. The formal acquisition took place Feb. 29 when, for slightly more than $29 million, the federal government became owners of the Elwha and Glines Canyon dams.

Acquisition was a crucial step in the decades-old effort to tear the dams down and rebuild the legendary salmon runs. Now all that's needed is money – and a lot of it. Removing the two dams and restoring the lower river could cost as much as $122 million; so far $52 million has been appropriated.

"With the transfer of the title of these dams, we have crossed the divide which will lead to the restoration of these salmon and steelhead runs," said Babbitt, adding that constructing the Glines Canyon and Elwha dams "cut the biological heart" out of Olympic National Park. "This river, which constitutes the core of this park, is virtually sterile with the dams in place."

More than eight decades ago, salmon access to the Elwha River was cut from more than 65 miles in length to just under five miles by the Elwha Dam. Since then, the river's six salmon species have all been slowly killed off. Some runs, including the legendary chinook salmon, are hanging on by a thread. Biologists agree that dam removal and river restoration offer the best hope for a comprehensive recovery of the river's ecosystem.

Congress passed the Elwha River Ecosystem Restoration Act in 1992, and two years later, Babbitt's office developed "The Elwha Report" which concluded that removal of both dams was the only alternative that would result in the full restoration of the Elwha River ecosystem and its fish runs.

The current plan for removing the Elwha Dam calls for a gradual drawdown of Lake Aldwell, the reservoir behind the structure, then "notching down" the aging dam by a series of block cuts.

The acquisition ceremony also featured U.S. Reps. Norm Dicks and Jay Inslee (D-Wash.).

"This victory shows that we are a people of optimism and confidence," said Inslee. "I am full of confidence that we are going to remove these two dams, which are old barriers to new dreams of salmon restoration."

Dicks, the dean of Washington state's congressional delegation, told the crowd that early on in the process most people were opposed to the idea of tearing down dams to restore a river and its salmon runs.

"I remember a meeting in which five out of 100 people wanted removal of these dams," said Dicks, gesturing to the bulk of Glines Canyon Dam just a stone's throw away from the podium. "Today, I can truly say, 'we've come a long way, baby!' We can say today, without any fear or doubt...that we can do this job of restoring this ecosystem. Here is a unique opportunity and that's why it's a worthwhile investment."

After the brief signing ceremony, dignitaries were honored with gifts from the tribe, as well as a traditional salmon dinner and dancing from the Elwha Tribe's traditional dance troupe.

Michael Langland, Elwha River restoration coordinator for the tribe, had little time to celebrate. Just a few days later, Langland was headed back to Washington, D.C. to meet with leaders from the National Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, and other key officials with hopes of keeping up the restoration momentum. — *D. Williams*

Russ Hepfer, Lower Elwha Klallam tribal chair, and tribal vice-chair Frances Charles, present Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt with gifts following a ceremony transferring ownership of the dams to the federal government, which plans to remove the structures. *Photo: D. Williams*

Summer Chum Recovery Plan Nearly Done

Hood Canal / Eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca summer chum aren't well known for much of anything. They aren't caught in sport fisheries, and haven't been an important commercial species for decades. When formally listed as a "threatened" species under the federal Endangered Species Act in 1999, they were overshadowed by the concurrent listing of Puget Sound chinook salmon.

But summer chum have an advantage over their cousins: A recovery plan – including habitat protection and restoration, harvest and supplementation measures, is nearly finished. The thick document is the result of work between fisheries and habitat biologists for treaty Indian tribes and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. Final edits to the plan were being made just as this issue of *NWIFC News* was going to press in late March.

Summer chum numbers fell for years. From runs of 10,000 or more in the 1970s, they plummeted to a few thousand fish in the early 1990s. This earned them "critical stock" status in a 1992 state/tribal review of western Washington salmon and steelhead stocks, and led to creation of a summer chum work group. Some stocks are showing signs of recovery, while others remain low.

The first steps were to reduce incidental summer chum catches in Hood Canal coho fisheries, and to stabilize spawning populations by capturing wild fish and spawning them in hatchery conditions. These efforts began in 1992 and, while the rate of decline eased, fisheries managers knew a better approach that included habitat protection and restoration was needed to fully restore summer chum.

This new plan also tackles the most important and difficult aspect of recovery: Habitat. Loss and degradation of habitat is the major factor in the decline of every salmon and steelhead stock, and politically, it's the most difficult part of the recovery process.

"Summer chum habitat is hard to restore when you consider they tend to spawn in the lower reaches of a river," said Ted Labbe, lead habitat biologist for the Point No Point Treaty Council, a natural resources consortium representing the Lower Elwha Klallam, Jamestown S'Klallam, Port Gamble S'Klallam and Skokomish tribes. "Lower reaches are typically stretches that have suffered the most degradation, and they are affected by actions occurring upriver."

On-the-ground recovery efforts are already well under way. There are at least four active projects in Hood Canal, and another three in the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca, with one of the largest occurring right in the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe's back yard, on Jimmycomelately Creek.

Making the Jimmycomelately estuary and lower stream a good place for summer chum and other fish will take years of work, said Byron Rot, habitat biologist for the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe. It means a complete relocation of the stream's current position back to its original channel.

Jamestown S'Klallam habitat biologist Byron Rot wants to make Jimmycomelately Creek's estuary a more fish-friendly place. *Photo: D. Williams*

"The channel must be in place three years from now to give it settling time before these fish return to spawn," Rot said. "This is probably the first attempt on the West Coast to restore both the lower end of a stream and its estuary. We want it to be a model for elsewhere. It's needed everywhere."

Some summer chum stocks stubbornly hang on; others are irretrievably lost. Supplementation projects are now either bolstering weak numbers or re-introducing fish into systems like the Big Quilcene River, Lilliwaup Creek, Hamma Hamma River, and Big Beef Creek. The largest of these projects is based at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Quilcene National Fish Hatchery.

Returning adult summer chum are spawned and their eggs are safely incubated in the hatchery, which underwent major modifications in 1998, including construction of a new egg incubation room especially for summer chum eggs. The offspring are released into the wild to continue the cycle.

"We have begun to show supplementation can be an effective way of recovering summer chum stocks in a relatively short time," said Chris Weller, PNPTC senior production biologist. "But the long-term objective is to restore wild runs, and that requires good quality habitat. So stock supplementation recovery efforts must be balanced with adequate habitat protection and restoration."

Since directed harvests on summer chum in Hood Canal haven't occurred for years, the "harvest" portion of the equation has been dealt with by curbing fisheries for other species that have a summer chum by-catch problem. As a result summer chum catches in U.S. waters have averaged less than 10 percent of the total run over the past eight seasons, and in 1998, less than 1 percent of all impacts occurred in U.S. waters. — *D. Williams*

Meat Salvage Effort Forges Friendships Betw

Efforts To Understand One Another's Needs Creates A Model Of Cooperation

Given the level of hostility over tribal hunting in eastern Washington's Methow Valley only a year ago, tribal members say it's heart-warming to see the degree of friendship and cooperation that exists with valley residents today.

Western Washington tribal members in need of game are now utilizing fresh deer meat from animals killed on roads, thanks to a Methow Valley citizen's group originally at odds with the tribes. And the tribes, for their part, are helping to protect vulnerable wintering mule deer that congregate on the Methow Valley floor.

"We're not only breaking down the walls, but we are building bridges for the future," said Swinomish Tribal Chairman Brian Cladoosby. "This shows how two groups of people can come together and resolve issues where there is truly an atmosphere of respect, not hate."

Representatives from several western Washington treaty tribes expressed their gratitude to the citizen's group with a luncheon in January at the Swinomish Spiritual Center in La Conner. The citizen's group delivered 300 pounds of cut-and-wrapped deer meat to the tribes at the event, which included traditional tribal drumming and songs, and a ceremonial meal of salmon and shellfish. The group provided 700 pounds of deer meat — or enough for about 1,500 meals — to the tribes' in November.

The citizen's group and eight western Washington treaty tribes have met for nearly a year to find common ground on efforts to balance management of distressed deer herds and the need for tribal hunting opportunities in the Methow Valley. The meetings have led to unprecedented cooperation and better mutual understanding of local conservation needs, treaty rights, tribal culture and hunting management.

"We're not going anywhere, you're not going anywhere; it seems like the only thing going anywhere is our (fish and game) resources," Cladoosby told the citizen's group. "So this is a good example of how we can work together to see that the resources are here with us. Our goal is the same — to make sure the resources are here for our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren."

Twisp rancher Bill White said problems rooted in poor perceptions quickly gave way to understanding and trust once the two parties sat down to work things out.

"An enormous amount of knowledge, and hopefully some wisdom, has been gained over the last year by both our people," he said. "Not only have our differences been settled, but some new friendships have been formed."

Using permits approved by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the citizen's group has since November collected fresh deer kills from vehicle collisions and provided them to a local butcher. The usable portions are professionally cut, wrapped and stored at tribal expense.

While not the preferred method for obtaining traditional foods, the tribes are accepting the meat in lieu of adequate tribal hunting opportunities.

"Because of habitat degradation and urban sprawl, some tribes over here no longer have meaningful opportunities to put these traditional foods on the table," said Todd Wilbur, Swinomish member and Chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission Intertribal Hunting Committee.

"We are greatly appreciative of the

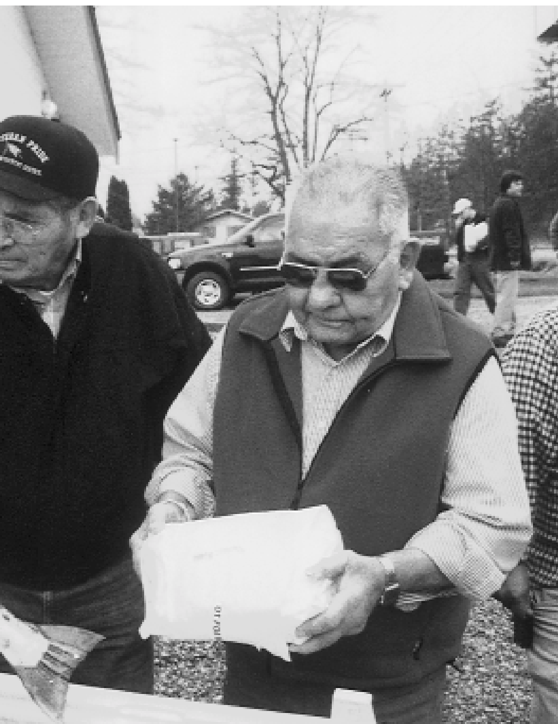
Methow Valley resident Gary Erickson, left, tribal member Chet Cayou, center, and Floyd

meat, but this is not our preferred way of being able to feed our people," Wilbur said, noting that deer and elk remain important elements of feasts for funerals, naming ceremonies and potlatches. "Our culture is to go out into the hunting grounds, say prayers, and to find our own animals and provide for our people. That is the way it was for our ancestors and that is the way it should be today."

Tension on hunting issues increased in 1998 when courts affirmed the tribal treaty right to harvest game on all open public lands. The Methow community had expressed concern about expanded hunting areas and increased tribal hunting pressure on the local mule deer population, which has declined sharply in recent years due in large part to harsh winters, loss of critical winter habitat and road kill.

"When this first started, winter deer harvest by tribes in the Methow Valley was perceived as a major problem," said

een Tribes, Methow Residents



admires a Skagit River steelhead with Swinomish Williams, Upper Skagit Tribe. *Photo: T. Meyer*

Gary Erickson, a citizen's group representative. "Looking back to the last year, my view is that it wasn't really a problem but an opportunity to learn more about the tribes and their needs, their goals, their traditions, and to discover they were no different than us."

Even though tribal harvest in the Methow Valley was quite low relative to non-Indian hunting, poaching or road kill, public perception was negative when legal winter hunting by tribal members harvested deer in the valley. Tribes recognized the perceptions persist, and that's why they want to work with local landowners on solutions while preserving their treaty right to hunt. For their part, the citizen's group and the state recognize that treaty hunting rights have repeatedly held up in federal court and seek to avoid litigation in settling disputes.

It is hoped the meetings will serve as a model of cooperation between the tribes and other communities where hunting issues remain tense.

"There are many other areas throughout the Northwest that share similar animosities toward tribal hunting, and I believe both sides can develop some type of model to where we can reach out to other communities and close those gaps as well," Wilbur said.

Road kill is a major problem on Highway 20 through the Methow Valley. The citizen's group indicated it was collecting one or two animals per day in November. Information from where most of the road kills are occurring will be used by the state Department of Transportation to determine placement of road signs to warn motorists.

Other areas of general agreement to emerge from the meetings are:

- Providing tribal funding and volunteers to work on winter deer feeding programs;
- Timing endings of tribal seasons to protect wintering mule deer;
- Focusing of tribal harvests on deer herds less vulnerable to harsh winter conditions;
- Developing maps to identify proper hunting areas and access points;
- Improving educational outreach about hunting practices and wildlife management; and
- Inviting tribal members to hunt on local landowners' property.

"This is a win-win program — not only for the resources, but for the tribes and the Methow folks," Wilbur said.

— L. Harris

Supreme Court Won't Hear Hunting Case

The United States Supreme Court has refused to hear an appeal of a criminal case regarding off-reservation treaty hunting rights.

The Supreme Court on Feb. 22 refused to review the case of Donald Buchanan, a Nooksack tribal member, who is accused of harvesting two elk from state lands near Yakima in 1995 in an area that was closed to state hunters at the time.

Buchanan claims the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott gives him the right to hunt on "open and unclaimed" lands, and does not restrict his rights to traditional hunting grounds.

"The tribes view a criminal case such as this as an inappropriate forum for determination of their treaty-reserved hunting rights," said Todd Wilbur, chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission's inter-tribal hunting committee.

"Full implementation of the tribes' hunting rights is currently under review," Wilbur said.

Last spring, the Washington State Supreme Court upheld that treaty tribes may hunt within original tribal lands and traditional areas and also said that the state-owned Oak Creek Wildlife Area where Buchanan was hunting was "open and unclaimed" land within the meaning of the treaties. The court threw out the state's argument treaty rights were eliminated when Washington became a state, saying that only the federal government can abrogate a treaty right.

Buchanan is scheduled to return to to district court in Yakima for another trial. Two lower courts ruled that Buchanan was simply exercising his treaty-reserved right when he harvested the elk.

Transferring Coho Takes A Team Effort

Tribe, Navy, USFWS Work Together To Move Young Salmon

A transfer of 200,000 yearling coho salmon from a land-based hatchery to net pens in the middle of a bay is usually tricky enough. But when the specialized barge used to safely move the fish is unavailable — and the hatchery must move the fish out to accommodate recently-hatched fingerlings — the problem gains urgency.

The Skokomish Indian Tribe found itself in just such a predicament. Their coho, rearing at the Quilcene National Fish Hatchery, had to be moved to net pens in Quilcene Bay to make room for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife facility's own upcoming coho fry. Enter the United States Navy.

The Navy loaned two oil spill containment boats from Naval Submarine Base Bangor that have enough deck space to handle two 1,000-gallon tanks, on loan from the U.S. Forest Service, for the fish transfer from the Quilcene National Fish Hatchery to rearing pens in Quilcene Bay.

The fish were loaded into a specially designed tanker truck for a short ride from the hatchery to the Quilcene Marina. They were transferred to the collapsible tanks aboard the Navy vessels and ferried to the net pens, which are located near the middle of Quilcene Bay.

Once in the net pens, the fish are fed daily by Skokomish Tribe Natural Resources Department employees, until they are ready for release, which is typically in mid- to late May when they average about 10 fish to the pound.

When the coho return, they will be harvested in a series of Indian and non-Indian, commercial and recreational fisheries. Hood Canal-origin coho are harvested in the Pacific Ocean off the west coast of Vancouver Island, in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, Admiralty Inlet, Hood Canal, and finally in Quilcene Bay and the Quilcene River.

"We're sending a letter expressing our thanks for the Navy's participation and suggesting that if they're interested, we could talk about them participating with us every year," said Dave Herrera, fisheries manager for the Skokomish Tribe. "They seemed eager to help us, and they saved us quite a bit of money."

Herrera said using the barge and a boat to tow it costs the tribe roughly $1,800 per year; all the Navy wanted for its time and effort was a full tank of fuel for the boats back to Bangor.

"Less than $200 for gas, versus $1,800 for the barge is quite a savings for the tribe," Herrera said, "so we're eager to have the Navy's participation in the future." – *D. Williams*

Tribal and federal hatchery crews work with a Navy crew to move juvenile salmon to net pens in Quilcene Bay. *Photo: D. Williams*

Salmon Homecoming Earns Honor

Western Washington treaty Indian tribes, the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and The Seattle Aquarium won the King County Event Producer (KEPA) Award for the Salmon Homecoming celebration. The event, entering its eighth year, is held in September on the Seattle waterfront. The award, presented March 1 at ceremonies held at the Paramount Theatre, was for Best Special Event (budget $125,000-$250,000). The awards program, which attracts contestants ranging from Bumbershoot to Sea Fair, is presented by the Sports and Events Council of Seattle/King County, a non-profit affiliate of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce.

Counting On Crab

Coastal Tribal Fishermen Look More To Crab To Make A Living

Quinault fisherman Pete Wilson takes a break from gearing up to go after black cod. *Photo: D. Preston*

Quinault fisherman Pete Wilson almost overlooks the time the windows were broken out of his boat by heavy seas during crab season. A piece of window glass lodged in his throat, just missing his jugular artery.

While most would consider this a significant event, to a commercial fisherman it is fairly low on the scale of perilous possibilities in the winter crab fishery.

Quileute tribal fisherman John Schumack knows all too well the ultimate cost of fishing. He lost his brother, George, in April 1998 to rough seas during the crab season. Two Quinault fishermen have also died in recent seasons. Commercial fishing is consistently ranked among the most hazardous occupations in the world.

"You're out there risking everything every day you fish and so is your crew," said Schumack.

"The one thing that I have learned is if you don't respect her, she will hurt you," said Wilson of the ocean and its unpredictable weather. "A big mistake is getting comfortable and complacent out there, thinking 'I've done this 100 times before.' "

Fishermen from the Quinault Indian Nation (QIN) and the Quileute Indian Tribe can make the better part of their income in a few months of crab fishing, or they can spend most of the year trying to make up the losses in other fisheries if crabbing isn't so good. Relatively low crab abundance in the Neah Bay area means it is a less significant fishery for the Makah Tribe. The Hoh Tribe plans to participate in the crab fishery in the future.

This year was good for the QIN. After nearly seven years of participating in the fishery, they had their best year ever, landing an estimated 750,000 pounds. By comparison, the non-tribal commercial coastal fleet has landed almost 13 million pounds so far this year.

John Schumack

"Our fishermen are learning as time goes on and getting better at the fishery," said Joe Schumacker, QIN marine shellfish biologist. "We were also fortunate. The crab in the area between Grays Harbor and Taholah, the only place our fleet fished, were abundant. The weather was good early and they did well," he said.

But in a display of the vagaries of fishing, the Quileutes had one of their poorest years of crabbing. Crab in the tribe's fishing area molted slowly this year. By the time the crab had shed their old shells and their new shells had sufficiently hardened, bad weather weather set in, making a successful fishery difficult.

After posting nearly 600,000 pounds of crab landings two seasons ago, the Quileute fleet has landed roughly 200,000 pounds of crab so far this season and will likely fish for crab into late spring to make up for the slow start.

There are roughly 18 QIN and six Quileute boats that participate in the crab fishery. While some crab fishing continues into late winter and even into early spring, most landings are made in late fall. A higher price late in the season provided some consolation for Quileute crabbers.

In March, most fishermen move on to other fisheries, such as halibut and black cod. Even with their best effort ever, the QIN has yet to harvest half of their treaty-reserved 50 percent share of the harvestable number of crab.

"We're a long way from ever reaching that 50 percent," said Wilson. "It will take a whole lot more effort and a lot larger fleet to reach that 50 percent."

The non-Indian commercial fleet in Washington has about 311 fishermen fishing 115,000 crab pots. With all the pressure to get out and make the catch early, small boats are put at a disadvantage and often in danger because they fish in weather they shouldn't.

"That's a challenge for tribal fishermen too. Your first boat is usually small. It's like trying to race in the Indy 500 with a John Deer lawnmower," said Wilson. "I have been blessed and was able to buy a bigger boat this year. My landings doubled and it's mostly due to better gear."

It can cost $250,000 to get into the fishery, including a boat and gear, "and a bank isn't going to go to bat for you based on the resource, they want existing collateral. For young tribal members, it's very difficult to start up in this business," said Wilson.

Schumack has fished the ocean since 1968 and skippered a boat since 1973. He crabs with about 350 pots that cost up to $150 each. U.S. Coast Guard re-

Continued On Page 12

Quileutes Leaders In Shellfish Toxin Monitoring

No one knows better than the Quileute Tribe that problems with toxins in fish and shellfish are increasing.

The tribe depends on these resources culturally and economically, and tribal members regularly consume shellfish as part of their diet. However, tribal members and others are being warned more and more often not to harvest clam and crab because high toxin levels can cause serious illness or even death.

The Quileutes have become a leader in monitoring water samples for "blooms" of the tiny ocean algae called phytoplankton that seem to correspond with harmful shellfish toxicity.

The tribe's work in conjunction with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has put them on the leading edge of studies looking at the relationship between phytoplankton blooms, toxins in seawater and the accumulation of toxins in shellfish. The tribe soon will begin field trials of promising new real-time tests for shellfish that will replace the cumbersome, time-consuming and expensive tests now used.

Both razor clams and crabs can contain toxins that may cause serious illness or death. But how and why the "blooms" in the water manifest themselves as toxin in shellfish is still largely unknown. In order to harvest shellfish, the tribe must sample individual shellfish, send the sample to a state lab and wait up to a week for the results to see if the shellfish are too "hot" in toxicity to eat or sell.

"But these toxin levels can go up very quickly," said Mitch Lesoing, marine biologist for the Quileute Tribe. "So what may come back as safe from the lab, may now be toxic a week later at the beach," he said. Almost every time the tribe wants to dig, an expensive test must be conducted. The tribe is developing an early warning monitoring system that incorporates basic science and new, state of the art technologies.

Lesoing is currently working with NOAA and a pharmaceutical company to develop a test that will detect the domoic acid toxin in seawater samples. The tribe will be participating in an international trial this summer that will test a molecular probe designed to detect the presence of the phytoplankton that appear to be producing toxins in seawater. Such tests would be used in a multi-leveled tiered monitoring system that will provide early warning of harmful algal blooms (HABS).

June Schumack prepares water samples for examination as part of a shellfish toxin monitoring program conducted by the Quileute Tribe. *Photo: D. Preston*

The rapid diagnostic tests, used in conjunction with information from remote sensors (satellite and buoys) delivering real time environmental conditions, will be incorporated with "old fashioned" basic scientific methods for phytoplankton observations to predict HABS.

The monitoring system offers real time data acquisition, predictability, cost effectiveness, access to marine resources, and most importantly, protection from exposure of toxins to humans, Lesoing said.

"Then you have what we call a real time test. We don't have to wait a week and we don't have to test a shellfish sample every time. These bloom events can be very localized, so you can send a sample from one part of the beach, but a quarter mile away, the levels are much higher. This kind of water test would let you do that kind of localized testing at a much lower cost," Lesoing said.

The tribe was able to find researchers on the leading edge of developing such tests at the Harmful Algal Blooms Conference in Tasmania in February. There, Mel Moon, natural resources director for the Quileute Tribe, and Lesoing, had the opportunity to interact with about 500 scientists from around the world who are studying HABs and their toxins.

"Harmful algal blooms are increasing on a global scale," said Moon. "There are many countries who are way ahead of the U.S. in terms of identifying these blooms as a real problem and really devoting coordinated research and funding to learn more and solve problems."

Lesoing and Moon connected with researchers who are close to having a product to test waters for certain toxins. The Quileute Tribe is likely to partner with Vera Trainer, NOAA marine biotoxin research biologist, to try the new tests in the field, Lesoing said.

"This is the kind of thing that can really get the ball rolling. We need additional sites on the Washington Coast to get involved in basic monitoring to make this effort work, and these products are a great encouragement to do that," said Lesoing.

— D. Preston

Tulalip Hatchery Naming Honors Bernie Gobin

Constructed almost two decades ago with a dream and $10,000, the Tulalip Salmon Hatchery now releases nearly 10 million juvenile salmon a year and provides one of the few Puget Sound chinook fishing opportunities for Indians and non-Indians alike.

Bernie Gobin

And yet the state-of-the art hatchery, considered a model in the business, may not have happened without the perseverence of former fisheries director, tribal council member and life-long fisherman Bernie Gobin. He worked tirelessly with former tribal chairman Stan Jones Sr., to build support for the hatchery from other tribal leaders and federal and state fish and wildlife officials.

"We are the salmon people. We knew if we were to continue our heritage, we needed to find a way to bring the fish back," said Gobin, referring to the chronic declines in salmon returning to Tulalip Bay that began decades ago.

Recognizing his efforts, the Tulalip Tribes officially renamed the facility the Bernie Kai-Kai Gobin Hatchery at an honoring ceremony Feb. 12 at the Tulalip Community Center. Meaning "blue jay" or "wise one," Kai-Kai is the Indian name of Gobin, who is 69.

After he and Jones visited a stream-fed hatchery on the Quinault Indian Reservation in 1976, Gobin began advocating a $10,000 tribal appropriation to start the hatchery. Fish and wildlife agencies provided eggs and supplies and, by 1982, the Tulalip Tribes became one of the first reservations in the region to own and operate their own salmon hatchery.

"Bernie Gobin was the right person at the right time," said Jones. "He knew all about lobbying and how to get to the politicians. It had to be him because he had that drive."

Under the guiding hand of long-time hatchery manager Cliff Bengston, the facility now releases an average of about five million chum, a million coho, 1.5 million fall chinook, 250,000 summer chinook and 50,000 spring chinook each year, benefitting sports, tribal and commercial fisheries.

"The benefit goes beyond tribal members still in the fishery, it helps every fisherman who fishes from out in the ocean all the way in," said Tulalip member Harold Joseph.

More than 300 people gathered to honor Gobin at the salmon luncheon, which was highlighted by a video tribute and words of praise from tribal leaders such as Jones, Tulalip Chairman Herman Williams and NWIFC Chairman Billy Frank — *L. Harris*

Quileute Tribe Opens New Natural Resources Building

A new natural resources building for the Quileute Tribe will more than triple the working area for staff and provide a view of the ocean and Quillayute river.

For nearly 20 years, a dozen biologists and office support staff have been crammed into a 1,200-square-foot building next to the LaPush Resort. The roof leaked, floors slanted downhill and uphill, and there wasn't room for meetings of any size. Noise in such small confines was also a problem.

The new modular, two-story building has 5,000 square feet of work space, including 12 offices and two conference rooms. Employees who have been scattered in various other buildings will now be under the same roof.

Wired with state-of-the-art electronics, including capabilities for video conferencing, the new building was designed with the future in mind. Instead of telephone modems, satellite technology will be used for internet access.

"We hope to get video conferencing up and running in the future. It will really help cut travel time and expense," said Mel Moon, Quileute natural resources director. "Having a building that is designed to fit our needs instead of having to conform to an existing building is a big asset."

The Quileute Tribe recently completed construction of a new natural resources building. *Photo: D. Preston*

Staff began moving into the building in mid-March. The building also includes kitchen facilites and a deck. An open house is planned in June. The modular building cost roughly $450,000 compared to a conventional "stick built" building that would have cost more than $750,000.

Totem poles are being commissioned for the entrance of the building that will reflect some of the natural resources important to the Quileute Tribe. — *D. Preston*

Fishin' Fun

Harvey Starr, 4, proudly shows off a trout he caught during a morning of fishing fun recently at the Muckleshoot Tribe. Starr was one of scores of tribal youth who broke in a new fishing tank for the Tacoma Chapter of Trout Unlimited. The tank, which the angler group transports to fairs and other events, was built for $8,500, with the tribe providing $5,000 of the cost. Participants were treated to breakfast, and a tribal elder blessed the tank. *Photos: T. Meyer*

Crab

(continued from pg.9)

quired safety measures, as well as the cost of bait, add about $15,000 to the cost of doing business, he said.

Wilson, 34, has fished for five years for himself and as a deck hand for a number of years. He also had a stint as a "suit and tie in Bellevue" long enough to know it wasn't for him.

Wilson knows it's easy to slip into the romanticized vision of the fishing life and forget about the business side. "Tribalism and capitalism are often diametrically opposed. But you have to treat fishing like a business and watch your bottom line." — *D. Preston*

High Tide Seafood personnel off-load crab from a tribal boat in LaPush.
Photo: D. Preston

Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission
6730 Martin Way East
Olympia, WA 98506
(360) 438-1180

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MAIL NW