



Grant PUD reports hatchery a success

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EPHRATA -- Approximately seven million juvenile salmon were released from the Priest Rapids Hatchery in June, the Grant County PUD reported.

"This marks another very successful year of fish releases and we are looking forward to their return in three to five years," said senior biologist Chris Carlson.

The salmon were reared from Chinook in the Columbia River who returned to the hatchery voluntarily to spawn, said Public Information Officer Kathy Kiefer. An estimated 8,200 Chinook swam to the hatchery.

"We have one of the most successful fall Chinook hatcheries on the river," Kiefer said.

The hatchery was constructed in 1963 as a channel for spawning salmon, she said. In 1972 it was transformed into a conventional spawning agency.

An off-ladder adult fish trap began operation the first week of July, she noted.

"The Grant PUD does a lot of work on behalf of natural resources, particularly for salmon, in the Priest Rapids project," she said.

U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife personnel operate the hatchery, which is funded by the PUD.

Six wells on-site and the Columbia River provide water for the hatchery. Excess eggs from the hatchery are distributed to other hatcheries across Washington, Kiefer said. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Indian tribes receive some of the eggs for use in hatcheries that are currently unable to sustain themselves, she said.

In October and November, eggs are taken for incubation from adult female Chinook. During winter eggs incubate in the hatchery building, which can hold up to 15 million eggs, Kiefer said.

The seven million eggs were released during a one-week period, from July 13 through July 21.