

# Dave Graybill

## The Fishin' Magician

Nickel Ads

I had a very interesting week, doing some different things. I toured the new Grant County PUD hatchery at Priest Rapids Dam. I shot video footage of the King of the Reach Salmon Derby that supports this hatchery. I also managed to get a steelhead trip in and put the first steelhead in the boat for the season.

Last Thursday, I was part of a media tour that took place at the new hatchery facility that Grant County just completed. This hatchery is dedicated to the production of up river Brights that are so popular with area anglers. This run is consistently the largest return of Chinook salmon in the contiguous United States. The hatchery is an upgrade of the existing facility that had been in operation since 1971. The construction cost was \$16.42 million and will produce 5.6 million smolts annually. The hatchery is owned by Grant County PUD and is operated by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Todd Pearsons, fisheries scientist with Grant County PUD, conducted the tour and explained that way back in 1963 a large spawning channel was constructed to handle the return of fall kings in the Hanford Reach. This just didn't produce as anticipated and a more traditional hatchery was built in 1971, but proved to be inadequate for several reasons, such as improved hatchery techniques, worker safety and capacity.

We were able to watch the whole process of gathering the thousands of fish that are used for hatchery purposes. We saw fish voluntarily enter the holding areas from the river, then the transfer of these fish to trucks to the new facility. They were sorted by sex and origin (natural spawning or hatchery produced) and then separated for eventual spawning for hatchery needs. Pearsons also explained that the excess fish were sent to local agencies, such as Northwest Harvest for distribution to food banks.



We also viewed the new incubation room that uses state of the art methods to produce as many as 13 million eggs. There new raceway holding areas that keep the young fish secure from predation until they are ready to be transferred to acclimation ponds prior to when they leave the facility to enter the Columbia River and begin their downstream migration.

The new facility can now efficiently produce the number of young fish to not only sustain this valuable run of fall fish, but improve the viability of its future. Each year the number of natural origin fish that return to the hatchery is increasing, and with careful management the ratio of natural origin to hatchery produced fish is increasing. Coupled with the economic benefits that the sport fishing of these fall fish represents the investment made by Grant County PUD will pay off. Many millions of dollars are returned to the local area as result of the sport fishing effort these fish attract.

The following day was the first of a three-day event conducted through a partnership with Grant County PUD,

the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Tri-Cities Chapter of the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA). Called the King of the Reach Salmon Derby, the aim of the event is to live capture natural origin fall-run kings in the Hanford Reach to be delivered to the hatchery. The need to improve the number of natural origin that are returned to the hatchery inspired Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist Paul Hoffarth to come up with an idea of a way to partner with Grant County PUD and the CCA to work together to do just that.

The way that the derby works is that anglers that register for the event use hook and line to catch fall kings. This is done after the sport fishing season is closed and only derby participants are allowed to fish this stretch of the Reach. The fish are put in live wells and either transferred to catch boats provided by Grant County PUD or delivered to WDFW workers at either Vernita or White Bluffs. The fish are then put into tanker trucks provided by Grant County PUD and then taken to the hatchery. Last year 77 boats delivered 400 fish to these trucks, and had a better survival rate than fish that voluntarily entered the hatchery.

This year participation was down, but anglers still delivered 305 natural origin fish to the hatchery. The friendly competition provides huge benefits to the future of the fishery here in the Hanford Reach and it also give anglers the opportunity to be named "King of the Reach" by delivering the largest number fish to the tanker trucks. This year the winner was Thor Ostrom, who caught and delivered 52 fish.

Anglers that pay the \$25.00 entry fee get their CCA membership renewed, a \$25.00 value, and receive a goodie bag worth at least that much as well. They treated to a hot lunch and dinner on shore and enjoy the

fellowship of the group all weekend. They can also buy a raffle ticket for a prize package valued at over \$1,200.00. Grant County PUD is a major contributor to the event, providing trucks, people and prizes, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife also provides staff. There is a CCA awards banquet in Richland on Sunday, too. To learn more about the event you can visit the derby web site at [www.cca.washington.org/kingofthereach](http://www.cca.washington.org/kingofthereach). Congrats to everyone for providing a great event with a very positive result for the future of our fisheries.

In between the hatchery tour and the derby my wife Eileen and I spent an afternoon fishing for steelhead at Bridgeport. She landed her first clipped fish of the season and I lost my first one. I am looking forward to getting back up there as the season matures.

Remember to mark your calendars and plan to attend the dinner and free seminars in Pateros on Friday, November 14th. Three experts will be sharing their secrets on how to fish for steelhead on local waters. Look for more information on this great evening in future reports and on my web site.

Don't forget to check out the new shows on both the Fishing TV and How To Pages on my web site at [FishingMagician.com](http://FishingMagician.com).

Rain or shine I will be back out on the water this next week. I will be sure to share with you what I learn about the great fisheries available to us here in our region.!

Reach Dave at:  
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## Steelhead Fishing Seminar

Friday, November 14th



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