

# News Release

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For Immediate Release

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## Over 200 Attend Groundbreaking Celebration for New Tribal Fish Hatchery Another Major Step Towards Elwha Restoration

Over 200 people gathered yesterday to officially begin construction of the new Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe Fish Hatchery. A groundbreaking ceremony at the hatchery site on the Tribe's reservation along the Elwha River was followed by a community dinner hosted by the Tribe.

Representative Norm Dicks, National Park Service Acting Regional Director Rory Westberg and Tracie Stevens, Senior Policy Advisor to the Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs took part in the ceremony, along with Frances Charles, Chairwoman of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and Karen Gustin, Olympic National Park Superintendent.

The new hatchery is a critical component of the Elwha restoration project and will help maintain existing stocks of Elwha River fish during dam removal and produce populations of coho, pink, and chum salmon and steelhead vital to restoration.

"We as tribal council and staff are following the path our elders set for us to protect and preserve our natural habitat. This hatchery is just one of the many steps along that path to building a pristine environment for Salmon to return home." said Frances Charles, Tribal Chair Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe.

Contractor James W. Fowler Co. of Dallas, Oregon began work on the hatchery last month; completion is scheduled for August 2011. The \$16.4 million construction project is funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, which gave \$3 billion to the Department of the Interior. Of that amount, \$750 million in funding goes to the National Park Service.

Construction of the hatchery includes site and access road improvements, water supply and drainage pipelines, water supply wells, two buildings, fish culture facilities including raceways, ponds and adult holding ponds, a fish ladder and related mechanical and electrical systems.

"We join the Tribe in celebrating construction of their new hatchery," said Olympic National Park Superintendent Karen Gustin. "This marks another important step towards Elwha restoration - the hatchery will produce populations of salmon and steelhead that will help restore the Elwha River after the dams are gone."

The Elwha River Ecosystem Restoration project is our nation's largest dam removal to date and one of the largest construction projects in the history of the National Park Service. Removing two aging dams on the Elwha River will restore the river to its natural free-flowing state and allow all five species of Pacific salmon and other anadromous fish to once again reach over 70 miles of near-pristine freshwater habitat. In turn, the salmon will return vital nutrients to the watershed, restoring the entire ecosystem, from insects to eagles.

The ARRA funds are part of a stimulus package that is an important component of the President's plan to jumpstart the economy and put a down payment on addressing long-neglected challenges so the country can thrive in the 21st century. Under the ARRA, Interior is making an investment in conserving America's timeless treasures - our stunning natural landscapes, our monuments to liberty, the icons of our culture and heritage - while helping American families and their communities prosper again. Interior is also focusing on renewable energy projects, the needs of American Indians, employing youth and promoting community service.

A full listing of National Park Service Recovery Act projects throughout the country, along with progress reports for each project, are available at <http://recovery.doi.gov/nps>.