

Neah-Kah-Nie art students get a firsthand look at what goes on at the life cycle monitoring station at Waterhouse Falls on the North Fork of the Nehalem River. Six students, armed with cameras, enjoyed a field trip to the site on Oct. 11.

Photos by
Dave Fisher



'Smiley Bros.' welcome annual return of COHO SALMON

By Dave Fisher
The Citizen

The return of the fall rains and the beginning of the Coho salmon return on the North Fork Nehalem can only mean one thing — the "Smiley Brothers" are at it again.

Two years ago, Manzanita residents Bill Campbell and Mike Ehlen helped spearhead the volunteer effort to transport hatchery-produced Coho salmon at the end of their life cycle to Garibaldi to be processed and canned for the North County Food Bank.

Campbell was quick to enlist the help Darius Peake and Cam Holte, owners of the Tillamook Bay Boat-house, a licensed food processing facility in Garibaldi. With the help of volunteers and the cooperation of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife and Oregon State University, the local food bank in 2009 received 1,129 cans of filleted Coho. Everyone was ecstatic.

"Just being involved with this puts a smile on your face," said Campbell. Hence, the Smiley Brothers label, a phrase Campbell credits Ehlen with.

Last year, the Smiley Brothers got serious. They took receipt of 740 harvested Coho salmon, 31 of which were filleted and delivered to Nehalem Bay House and Kilchis House assisted living homes in Tillamook County, where they were prepared for the residents providing more than 330 meals. In addition, the Tillamook Bay Boat-house produced 6,889 cans of filleted salmon; 1,800 of the 7.5-oz. cans were delivered to the North County Food Bank in Wheeler, with the balance of 5,089 going to the Tillamook Regional Food Bank for distribution.



The "Smiley Brothers," who help make it all happen. From left: Bill Campbell, Darius Peake, Mike Ehlen and Derek Wiley ODFW team leader for the monitoring project.

With the upstream migration just underway this fall, it's too early to tell how many fish will be pulled from the life cycle monitoring station at Waterhouse Falls on the North Fork and make it to the canning facility on Tillamook Bay. Campbell is hoping for another year like last year.

Still evolving, the Coho harvest program has grown and now involves students from Neah-Kah-Nie High School and the Rotary Club of North Tillamook County.

Art instructor Steve Albrechtisen accompanied six of his art students on a field trip to Waterhouse Falls on Oct. 11, followed by another out-

ing two days later to the Tillamook Bay Boat-house to see the finished product. Neah-Kah-Nie students competed in designing a label for the canned salmon last year, with the winning design adorning the cans. This year, in addition to the label, students are in the midst of designing and producing an 11 x 17 inch poster to commemorate the harvest. The field trips afforded them the opportunity to witness the process firsthand and to take photographs.

"We look to have the poster ready by the end of the month," said Albrechtisen, who, like his st-

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dents, enjoyed the outing to Waterhouse Falls.

"It expands involvement," said Campbell of the students' participation. "It helps make connections and gets the word out there as to what we're doing."

Another new wrinkle is the sponsorship of the program by the Rotary Club. "We heard about it last year and it was just so great, we decided to join forces this year," said club president Judy Hathaway.

With its non-profit 501c3 status, tax-deductible contributions will be funneled through the club. Additional help comes in the form of hauling harvested salmon to Garibaldi, says Hathaway. "It helps take the burden off of Bill and Mike. We just want to offer our support in any way we can," Hathaway said.

To help offset expenses for processing and labeling, the fundraising effort is underway. The Smiley Brothers took in \$9,139 in cash donations last fall that was used to offset the total cost of \$10,600 for processing and labeling. The Oregon Food Bank covered the balance.

Processing the salmon at a cost of \$1.50 per can enabled the Tillamook Bay Boathouse to extend the seasonal work for its cannery crew of eight people more than three weeks, another positive outcome of the program.

Labeling costs were \$.0625 per can, and could not have been done, says Campbell, "without the 'can-do spirit' of the Neah-Kah-Nie High School students and staff.

Another new wrinkle is the affiliation with the Tuna Classic held each year at the Port of Garibaldi, where private individuals pledged their catch for the one-day event to the food bank. Processed at cost by the Tillamook Bay Boathouse, the high protein canned tuna adds to the food bank mix.

With the Coho harvest in full swing, it's not too late to donate to the effort. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to the North Tillamook County Rotary Club, Attn: Waterhouse Falls Coho Salmon Harvest, P.O. Box 74, Manzanita, OR, 97130.

Those contributing \$50 or more will receive the commemorative the 2011 Water House Falls Coho Salmon Harvest and Tuna Classic poster designed by Neah-Kah-Nie High students.

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