Fish Ladder

Salmon and steelhead hatch and partially grow up in rivers and streams. Then they journey to sea where they spend most of their adult lives. Near the end of their life cycle, the few that have survived journey back from the sea to spawn in the streams where they were hatched years before. Between hatching and spawning, the returning fish must survive many hazards. In the end, less than one egg in 1,000 survive to spawn as an adult.

Even in 1917, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers understood the importance of fish passage facilities. They constructed a 10-step ladder to the south of the spillway dam. In 1976, a new ladder was built to reflect modern fish ladder standards and the amount of attraction water was increased. Today's ladder has 21 steps, or weirs, which allow the fish to swim upstream on a gradual incline.

Fish Facts

Sockeye, chinook, and coho salmon, as well as steelhead, migrate through the ship canal back to Lake Washington and its tributaries. Six lighted windows in the fish viewing room provide visitors with an underwater view of the migrating fish in the elongated 18th step. Attraction water (water moving swiftly in a direction opposite the fish) helps fish find the ladder. An underwater conduit drains salt water from the basin at

the upstream end of the large lock into the ladder. The salt water mixes with the fresh water from the lake, providing an abundance of attraction water and an area for the fish to gradually adjust to fresh water.

Fish Counts

The Muckleshoot Indian Nation works diligently to improve fish stocks in the Lake Washington watershed. They have been active at the Locks for many years conducting research and fish counts.

Point of Contact: Dru Butterfield	Phone: (206) 789-2622 x210	Email: DRU.E.BUTTERFIELD@USACE.ARMY.MIL