



Merle Hayes Salmon Enhancement Center

The Suquamish Tribe's Merle Hayes Salmon Enhancement Center sits nestled among forest preserves where Grovers Creek empties into Miller Bay. This center is a key component of the Suquamish Tribe's Salmon Enhancement program, which provides salmon for Tribal fisheries in two important ways: restoring naturally spawning chum and coho populations and supplying enhancement center chinook without impacting threatened or weak wild salmon stocks.

The Suquamish Tribe designed and built the Merle Hayes Salmon Enhancement Center, which was completed in the early 1980's. At that time, it was named Grovers Creek Hatchery, but was recently renamed in 2023. The large stream at the mouth of Grovers Creek allowed for larger-scale hatchery operations than near-by former Cowling Creek Hatchery. Though Merle Hayes Salmon Enhancement Center began primarily as a coho and steelhead hatchery, the center now releases about 500 thousand Chinook and 250 thousand chum salmon into the wild each year. Quality is valued over quantity in all Merle Hayes Salmon Enhancement Center operations, as raising fewer higher quality fish is better for salmon survival. In a process that is repeated many times over, small batches of salmon eggs are fertilized by multiple mature salmon. This helps ensure a healthy genetic variation among each new generation of fish. The eggs are raised in low density, and young fish are released at night when they're ready to leave the safety of the center. They will remain at sea for several years before returning to the site of their release. About two thousand Chinook will return to the center each year throughout September and October, and approximately fifteen hundred Chum return to the center during the later fall months.

Merle Hayes

Merle Hayes was a Suquamish Tribal Elder, who spent his life living on the Suquamish land. He retired from the Suquamish Tribal fisheries department in 2017, where he had spent two decades as a Fisheries Policy Liaison for the department. His life passion and dedication were based on protecting the Tribe's treaty rights and respect for the salmon. Merle was recognized by the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission for his outstanding work to uphold the Sovereignty treaty rights and natural resources by receiving the Billy Frank Jr Leadership Award in 2018.