

WHATCOM CREEK CLOSES TO FISHING

Under an emergency order issued at the end of November by the state fish and wildlife department, Whatcom Creek will close to all fishing Monday, Dec. 10, to safeguard returning hatchery-bound steelhead.

To get sufficient steelhead eggs to keep the Nooksack River program going, the agency has turned to raising and releasing 40,000 of its annual basin smolt production at the Maritime Heritage Center, an educational/working fish hatchery operated by the Bellingham Technical College and home to its Fisheries and Aquaculture Sciences and Technologies Course.

It's expected from this that instead of returning to the river and experiencing the gauntlet of nets, some adults will enter the downtown Bellingham fish-rearing facility to be secured as sources of eggs to propagate for future runs.

Under WDFW policy, many hatchery runs must be sustained within each individual major river basin. Inter-basin transfers of steelhead eggs are no longer allowed if a hatchery comes up short on broodstock.