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SKAGIT AND TRIBUTARIES IN SPAWNING PROGRAM

The State Fisheries is now conducting a study in which they hope to build the sockeye run in the Skagit River and tributaries by establishing a controlled salmon run incubation channel which would allow them to have a maximum take of eggs from the state fish hatcheries.

The proposed planning would include another artificial spawning beach at upper Baker Lake, to be built this summer. The department has negotiated with Puget Power for the building of this third spawning beach, which will be the same size as No. 2 now being used and will handle another 1,000 sockeye adults.

They are also considering the use of the Newhalem Ponds on the upper Skagit as rearing ponds and there will be a study of possible sites on the Sauk River. All sites would have to be free from damage by flood waters.

At the present time the department's hatchery division has the capacity to incubate 210 million eggs but can rear only 125 million fish. This leaves 58 million eggs which could be used in the Skagit project, George C. Starlund, director, said.

The job could be done if natural side channels of the Skagit were modified to permit a regulated low flow in the channels by means of culverts and earth banks of sufficient heights to hold excessive flooding and erosion.

Three types of facilities are under consideration for the Skagit area, Starlund said. They are controlled incubation of eyed eggs, controlled natural rearing ponds and

artificial spawning beaches for sockeye on the tributary Baker River.

In preparation for the use of such channels, the research and engineering division of the department have been developing an eyed-egg planting machine, termed by the department the "Iron Mother." The planter now is going through a testing and modification program.

During the next few months an engineering-biological team will begin exploration of the Skagit drainage area for sites for eyed-egg planting. Preliminary investigations have indicated several sites possible on the river, including the vicinity of Illabot Creek and the Sauk River drainage.