

# NEWS

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A project that could amount to a million dollar a year marine industry and provide more than a dozen full-time jobs by next fall has been started on Squaxin Island by members of the Squaxin Indian tribe.

Working in cooperation with the Small Tribes Organization of Western Washington (STOWW) and seven students from The Evergreen State College-ACTION project, Squaxins are beginning to build an economic base for their tribe with an aquaculture project centered on a fish farm afloat 200 yards off the island.

"They have begun raising two varieties of salmon, chinook and chum, on the farm and feel like the tribe is really on the move," Peggy Dycus, coordinator of the Evergreen-ACTION project, said. "We see the farm as the dawning of a new day for Indians --- a time of economic independence that will allow us to be Indian."

Ms. Dycus said the tribe is making plans to expand production to include the raising of littleneck clams, oysters and geoduck.

With the technical assistance of two marine biologists provided by STOWW, the tribe has identified three sections of beach surrounding the farm as possible sites for oyster beds, according to Cal Peters, Squaxin business manager.

"We have hope --- well founded we think --- that the farm will be completely owned and operated by the tribe within two years," Peters said.

Initial fundings for the project were received from the Economic Development Administration, the Office of Economic Opportunity, Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of Labor.

"They helped us get started," Peters said. "And, now that we've got things going,

Dick Nichols, Director  
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we're going to be responsible for keeping the fish fed and the farm in operation."

Feeding those fish is one of the jobs of the seven Evergreen students.

"The salmon eat 1500 pounds of fish per day, or two per cent of their body weight," Peters added. "It takes a lot of work just to keep them fed, especially since the fish are now at a stage where two pounds of feed yield about one pound of fish."

The students, who are sponsored by Evergreen's Office of Cooperative Education, are also learning the art of scuba diving with the aid of STOWW funds.

"Once a month we have to change the net under the 3,600-square foot production pen," Peters said. "Holes appear in the net and sometimes algae collects and prevents circulation, so six divers must go under the old net and stretch a new one. When the new one is secured, another nine-to-12 people must remove the damaged net to the beach, where it can be cleaned and repaired."

Students are also involved in collecting data on the history of the Squaxin people and in specialized study of shellfish and salmon under faculty sponsorship and field supervision from STOWW biologists, who are researching the effects of dry and wet feed, cost efficiency and diseases.

One-third of the island is owned by non-Indians, Peters said. The tribe hopes eventually to be able to invest profits from the project into buying and improving the island property.

Since the island has no regular boat service, no electricity and no fresh water supply, many of the Squaxins live in Shelton and nearby Kamilche. None live on the island.

"If we can buy back the property, we will then be able to establish real economic --- and environmental --- independence for our tribe," Peters said.