

Whitlocks Bay Spawning Station

Operated by the South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks



Lake Oahe is one of a few North American lakes where Chinook salmon thrive and give anglers a thrilling experience. Whitlocks Bay Spawning Station plays a vital role in the existence of salmon in central South Dakota.

This facility is located along the shore of Lake Oahe at Whitlocks Bay, 18 miles west of Gettysburg, SD. It has a fish ladder, four concrete holding ponds, crowding raceways, a spawning building and a water supply system. Water is pumped from the bay into the holding ponds and flows down the fish ladder back into the bay.



Above: Whitlocks Bay Spawning Station



Above: Fish ladder at normal lake elevations.

Whitlocks Bay Spawning Station helps provide better fishing for anglers. The fish ladder is used by Chinook salmon each fall and, in the past, was used by rainbow trout. The fish swim up the fish ladder, enter the concrete holding ponds and are later moved into the building, where artificial spawning occurs. Spawning involves the collection of eggs and sperm. The fertilized eggs are taken to state fish hatcheries. The resulting hatchery-raised fish are stocked back in Lake Oahe to grow and thrive in this large, deep, cold body of water.



Left: Moving salmon into spawning station

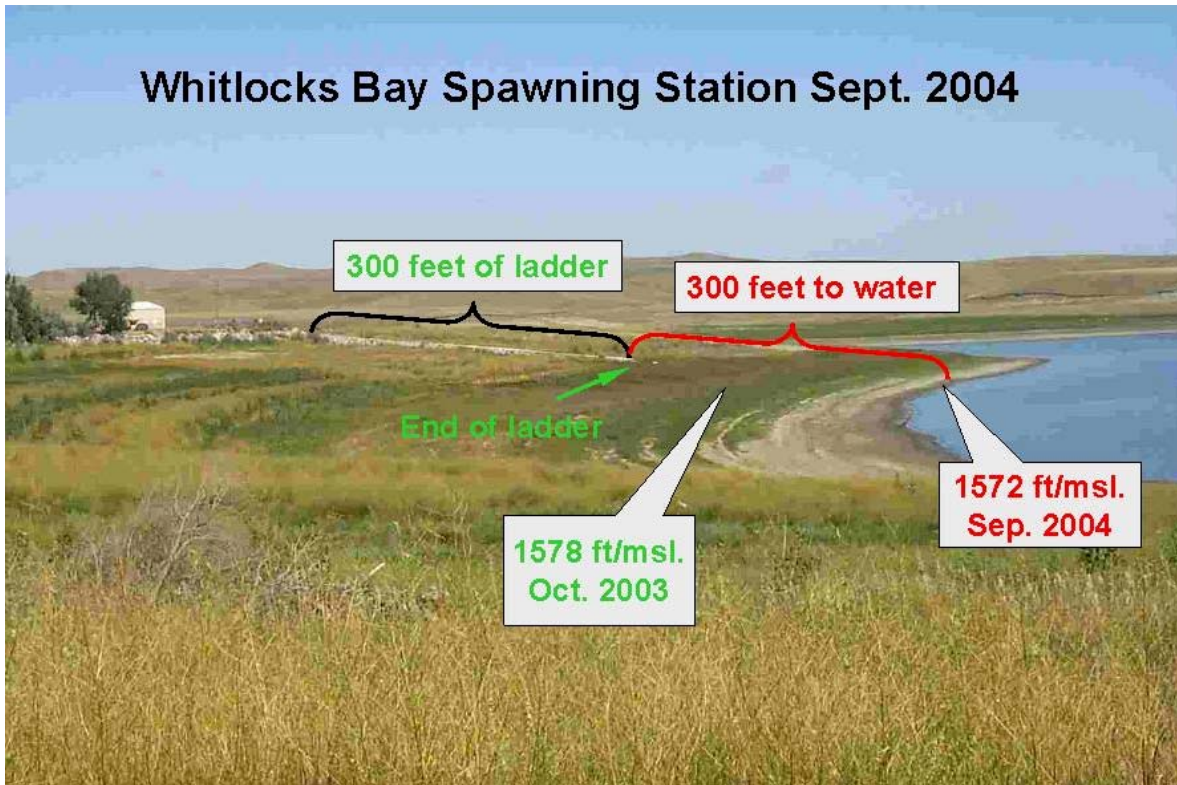


Right: Collecting eggs from female salmon

No suitable habitat exists in the lake for Chinook salmon to reproduce naturally. Whitlocks Spawning Station allows for the completion of their life cycle and helps to ensure future populations of these fish. Because of these fisheries management efforts, Lake Oahe, is the only place in South Dakota and one of the few places in North America where you can hook and land a Chinook salmon.

FACTS

- Whitlocks Bay Spawning Station was built in 1982 and became operational in 1984
- 2.5 million trout and 14.7 million salmon eggs have been collected since 1984
- Est. Annual-Program Cost (\$104,000) versus Annual Regional Economic Benefit (\$1.7 million) from 1993-1997
- 2004 was the first year since the station was built (20 years) that it was not able to operate due to record low water elevations
- In 2004, intensive efforts by the SD GFP on Lake Oahe and assistance from North Dakota provided salmon eggs for SD to stock juvenile salmon in 2005
- Continued low water levels will likely make the station inoperable again in 2005
- 1579 ft/msl is the minimum lake elevation the station can operate
- Operation past the end of the concrete ladder involves steel culvert ladder extensions, additional pipe, electrical wire and adequate water depth for the water supply system



Above: Whitlocks Bay Spawning Station inoperable at water elevations as of September 2004.