

snapshot

SNAPSHOT

Preserving Fish for Researchers Everywhere

The University of Washington School of Aquatics and Fishery Sciences Uses Proven Spacesaver Storage Solutions to House 10 Million Objects



THE CHALLENGE

The University of Washington School of Aquatics and Fishery Sciences received a grant from the National Science Foundation to bring the largest collection of otoliths to their facility in Washington and make it available to researchers anywhere in the world. Otoliths are small bones found in the inner ears of fish and can be used to age the species, and to assess the changes in ocean chemistry over time. The collection consisted of approximately 1.9 million samples, collected since the late 1970s and housed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Some of these bones are preserved in small vials of alcohol and are highly flammable. NOAA had the collection stored in Styrofoam boxes that would actually melt if there was a fire, sealing the samples within, and destroying them forever. The samples were also being stored in a large aircraft hanger with no fire suppression ability, the boxes stacked 20 feet high. The storage situation was such a fire hazard that NOAA was told that the fire department would not actually fight any potential fire and the collection would be lost.

The University of Washington not only had to find space to store 1.9 million small bones, but they needed to transfer them from their Styrofoam storage containers to a cardboard container during processing (a total of 12,000 boxes that needed to be stored on site).

THE SOLUTION

Spacesaver Northwest, the Authorized Spacesaver Representative in Washington, had provided a high-density mobile storage system over twenty years ago to house the School's fish collection. This collection includes 4100 species of fish, equal to 300,000 adult fish samples in jars or in large refrigerated drawers that were custom designed by the University and Spacesaver Northwest.





Currently the 12,000 boxes of samples fit easily in the new ActivRAC 7M system and has room to store up to 17,000



Refrigerated roll-out drawers were custom designed by the university and Spacesaver Northwest to house large adult fish samples.



This system is still actively in use and being accessed on a daily basis. Due to this successful, long-lasting installation, the University knew exactly who could help them solve their latest storage challenges.

Spacesaver Northwest recommended ActivRAC 7M outfitted with standard industrial-grade racking to store the massive otolith collection. The racking is currently installed at 10 feet high, even though the room has ceilings nearly twice as high. This is due to the fire suppression system in the room. To be able to use the full height of the space the fire suppression system will need to be upgraded. An unexpected benefit to the current height of the racking is the ease of accessing the samples with a standard ladder.

The top mount rail used with ActivRAC 7M is anchored right into the unfinished concrete, which means no raised floor or grouting was needed to complete this mobilized storage installation. This helped keep costs down for the University and meant that the room didn't need to be altered prior to the installation.

"The room is crammed full of these amazing compact shelves, that easily roll back and forth, and we are able to fit all of these boxes with plenty of room for growth."

Katherine Maslenikov, Ichthyology Collections Manager.

STORAGE SOLVED

Currently the 12,000 boxes of samples fit easily in the new ActivRAC 7M system and has room to house upwards of 17,000 boxes. Because the racking is only ten feet high there is also room to add shelving vertically, once the fire suppression system is upgraded.

The consolidation and addition of this collection of otolith samples makes the University of Washington School of Aquatics and Fishery Sciences one of the largest fish collection houses in the world with approximately 10 million objects.

"The room is crammed full of these amazing compact shelves, that easily roll back and forth, and we are able to fit all of these boxes with plenty of room for growth," said Katherine Maslenikov, Ichthyology Collections Manager.

To learn more about Spacesaver Storage Solutions and how a Spacesaver Storage Specialist can help you overcome your storage challenges, please visit www.spacesaver.com or call 1-800-492-3434.



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