

## **Sacrifices needed for salmon runs**

Fish managers say the state has just 10 years to bring wild salmon runs in Puget Sound back from the brink of extinction.

A decade from now, if state, federal and tribal officials and local property owners don't have habitat protections in place and clean water for salmon to spawn in, it might be too late. This state has already lost 15 of 37 Puget Sound salmon populations.

Further decimation of the species is unforgivable.

Across Puget Sound, spawning wild chinook salmon have dropped to 10 percent of their historic levels. We, as a society, have destroyed their habitat, polluted their water, dammed their rivers, overharvested them and mismanaged hatchery fish in competition with wild fish runs. The declining salmon runs are the fault of mankind, and it's up to mankind to reverse the trend before it's too late. It's going to take shared sacrifices on the part of every man, woman and child to create healthy salmon runs in Puget Sound.

### **Official transmission**

Thursday is a pivotal day in that effort. It's the day government officials and tribal leaders, in conjunction with environmentalists, business leaders and private property owners, will formally transmit the region's salmon recovery plan to the federal government. Once approved, the so-called "Shared Strategy" plan will become the blueprint for salmon recovery. The goal is to increase the number of wild chinook from 38,000 today to 76,000 during the next 10 to 15 years.

That's a costly proposition -- an estimated \$1.2 billion during the next decade. But the alternative -- allowing salmon runs to go extinct -- is unacceptable.

Creating a healthy habitat for salmon is no easy task, as evidenced by what it will take here in southern Puget Sound.

In the Nisqually watershed, wild chinook runs were wiped out 30 years ago. About 2,600 hatchery fish spawned naturally in the Nisqually River last year, and the goal is to bump that number to 3,600 spawning fish per year.

To reach that goal, the Nisqually estuary will have to be restored, and the shoreline along the river will have to be protected from further development. To restore fish habitat, bulkheads must be removed, and wider shoreline buffers must be created.

The Shared Strategy plan for South Sound would spend \$100 million during the next five years to remove concrete bulkheads, create larger buffers, eliminate stormwater and new wastewater discharges into Puget Sound and reduce the number of boat docks and boat ramps.

### **Population growth**

Puget Sound is ringed with about 3.8 million people. That number is expected to grow to 5.2 million individuals by 2020. The question is whether salmon can survive amid that population boom.

It's imperative that we make every effort to save the salmon. They are an indicator species, and if they continue to decline, that means other wildlife and waterways will continue to deteriorate, too. The salmon are an important part of our Northwest heritage. Passing the opportunity to catch a wild salmon on to the next generation is our collective obligation.

As remarkable as the Shared Strategy is, questions must be answered. Who is going to monitor enforcement? The federal and state governments must share that responsibility. Where will the money come from? State officials should at least consider a dedicated tax in addition to looking at the allocation of development fees and going after grants and other sources of federal dollars.

Members of the public must be prepared to pay higher taxes and alter the way they live. As Bill Ruckelshaus, former EPA director and chair of Salmon Recovery Funding Board, told The Olympian's editorial board Friday afternoon: "We know what to do to bring these fish back. Can we generate the political will to do it? If we can't do it with this resource in a confined area, how are we ever going to solve global warming and some of those much more complex issues?"