

THE FARM-FREE SALMON PLEDGE

In the spring of 2008, the Pacific Fishery Management Council announced the closure of both the commercial and sport fishing for wild Chinook and Coho Salmon for California and Oregon coasts and rivers. The immediate impact of this will cost the west coast over 200 million dollars and over 4,200 jobs. The long term effects could be much greater if we don't act now.

Fish. restaurant in Sausalito, Ca. is taking the first step by introducing the Farm-Free Salmon pledge. Restaurants and retailers taking this pledge will remove farmed salmon from their menus and shelves using only wild salmon when it is available. By doing this, they will protect the marine food webs that are plundered to support farmed salmon, prevent the waste that open ocean pens produce, and eliminate the possibility of escape of non-native species into our west coast ecosystems while supporting the fishing communities that depend on healthy oceans and wild salmon populations for their future.



Today, rivers and streams on the Pacific Coast are dammed, degraded, drained, diverted, buried under silt or otherwise unable to support abundant salmon populations. Consequently, some salmon populations that once supported communities along our Pacific coast are severely imperiled to the point where numerous fish populations are now protected by the federal and/or state Endangered Species Acts.

The loss of Pacific salmon populations has damaged coastal and tribal communities all along our coast and inland to Idaho and Nevada. Across the country, families are faced with the choice of paying high prices for wild salmon (if they can be found), or buying farmed Atlantic salmon of dubious quality and nutritional value, or not eating salmon at all. Commercial fishermen have been forced to fish in unsafe weather in order to make boat, insurance, and related payments. Over the last couple of decades, the Pacific Coast commercial fishing fleet has declined from more than 10,000 salmon fishermen to 1,000. Many of these remaining fishing men and women work second jobs in to order to make ends meet. Native American tribes can no longer depend on the salmon

for sustenance as they always have; as a result, these people are suffering skyrocketing increases in heart disease and diabetes. As salmon populations decline, more and more of their food now comes from the grocery store – it is high in starch, fats and sugars.

But salmon are very resilient! If you restore healthy rivers and habitat and give them a half a chance, they will bounce back. CASE IN POINT: Sacramento River winter run Chinook salmon nearly went extinct in the early 1990's; their numbers had dwindled to a mere 186 spawning adults. Once they were protected under the Endangered Species Act, measures were undertaken to restore habitats in the Sacramento River. Dams were modified to provide cooler water for incubating salmon eggs. A nearby mine that was leaking acid into the Sacramento River was cleaned up. Another dam that was blocking salmon migration was opened. Within a few years of these improvements, winter run Chinook salmon numbers had increased to over 8,000 spawning adults. The winter run of Sacramento River Chinook salmon is still imperiled; we can restore these populations if we choose to protect and enhance their freshwater habitats.

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