

Pacific Salmon Commission Annual Meeting

**Embassy Suites Hotel
319 SW Pine Street
Portland, Oregon
Wednesday, February 14, 2007
1:00 p.m.**

Talking Points

Ron Speaks at 1:10 p.m. (20-25 minute presentation and Q&A).

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me to speak to the Pacific Salmon Commission. I was so pleased to get the invitation from Larry to come down and visit with you.

(A Personal Connection to Salmon and Our Ecosystem)

As a native of Spokane, Washington, a resident of Seattle, and a locally elected leader, salmon are as much a part of who I am as are the rolling hills of the Palouse, the snowy peaks of the Cascade Mountains and the glistening waters of the Puget Sound.

Salmon are as rich and meaningful a symbol of the history and culture of the Pacific Northwest as can be found. They tell us, from year to year and generation to generation, how well we have managed our precious natural resource heritage.

The signals we are getting from our natural resources are troubling to me as an individual and an elected official. The glaciers on the Cascades are shrinking as climate change takes hold. Those glistening waters of the Puget Sound mask a water body – so essential to our salmon and to us – that bears the signs of a landscape that has changed in dramatic ways.

And the signal we are getting from our salmon is just as alarming. Our salmon populations are smaller and less healthy by any measure, and as a result cultures, economies and rivers from Alaska to Seattle to California are being starved of the nourishment that these fish can provide.

Where there has been dedication and effort to recognize and turn the tide of these trends, we need to redouble it. Where there has been ambivalence, we need to show the value of action and provide energy.

Where there has been blindness to our duty, we need to provide vision. Our discussion today is a step toward meeting these needs.

My message today is about commitment and hope, and not about bad news and despair. The timing of my visit is especially meaningful as we now have a federally approved Recovery Plan for Puget Sound Chinook.

We in the Puget Sound region are extremely proud of this Plan and feel it is a critical guide for decision-makers and managers who have important contributions to make to salmon recovery.

It is a great, shared starting point for this generation to get on the right track toward our goals of sustainable and harvestable salmon populations.

I know the timing is especially meaningful in the context of the Commission's work as well. You are at the start of what history tells us is a challenging and powerful opportunity: renegotiating portions of the Pacific Salmon Treaty, the document that sets the tone for and guides the harvest of our rich variety of salmon as they cross international boundaries.

Local habitat managers have traditionally been outsiders to the Treaty process.

But even as an outsider I recognize the critical importance – and the Chinook Recovery Plan is a shining illustration of this – of the Treaty and the influence it has over the everyday decisions by harvest managers that so directly affect our salmon.

I am hoping that through my visit with you today that I can give you a habitat manager's view of our salmon recovery challenge and convey the strength of our commitment to succeeding in this challenge. I can assure you that our commitment is strong.

I am also hoping that together we can begin to break down the some of the mystery – and maybe even some of the mistrust – that can stand in the way of taking the steps that are necessary across habitat and harvest management to save and sustain these fish.

This is a great opportunity for us to move beyond – at least for these few hours, but hopefully much longer – the sense that habitat managers are outsiders in harvest, and harvest managers are outsiders in habitat. Everyone in this room, and the millions of people in this region we serve, is an “insider” for salmon recovery.

We have an awesome responsibility to share our talents, knowledge, and considerable resources to the benefit of our cherished salmon.

Let me now give you a sense of where I come from and the work that is happening that makes me optimistic that we understand the salmon recovery challenge and are on the right track to meet the challenge.

(Background on King County)

- King County is located in the eastern shore of Puget Sound; Seattle is the county seat.
- The County comprises over 2,000 square miles that extend from the saltwater of the Sound to the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest and the crest of the Cascade Mountain Range.
- King County is the largest local government in the Puget Sound basin and the largest local government responding to a Pacific salmon listing under the Endangered Species Act.

- King County is the home of 1.8 million people, 29 percent of the population of the State of Washington, and is the 14th largest county in the United States.
- King County is home to 5 populations of chinook, 5 populations of steelhead, and populations of sockeye, coho, chum and pink salmon.
- Four Indian tribes have Usual and Accustomed Fishing Areas that overlap with King County boundaries: the Muckleshoot Tribe, the Tulalip Tribes, the Suquamish Tribe, and the Puyallup Tribe.
- Our fish pass through the Usual and Accustomed Fishing Areas of six more Indian tribes – Lummi, Swinomish, Jamestown S’Klallams, Port Gamble S’Klallams, Lower Elwha Klallams, and Makah.
- King County is the home of the largest port north of the Bay Area; the Port of Seattle is making huge investments in commercial fishing facilities; it is the home of a fishing fleet that ventures up and down the coast; it is home to 11,000 fishing related jobs paying \$846 million in salaries and wages.

(The Role of Local Governments in Managing Habitat)

Local governments are on the front lines, at the nexus of a range of fundamental and sometimes conflicting human values.

Elected officials like me make weighty decisions every day that affect families, housing, livelihoods, transportation, wildlife – so many things that contribute to the quality of life of not only the people that vote for us but also people in faraway places whose only link to us might be the salmon that are born in our streams but feed in their estuaries hundreds or thousands of miles away.

We will all go home tonight or after this meeting and be in the jurisdiction of a local government that plays a key role – an on-the-ground role – in meeting basic and essential needs of the people and wildlife in your neighborhood.

Local governments in Puget Sound are tackling the complex and far-reaching habitat problems that must be addressed to bring salmon back.

These problems should not be a surprise to anyone by now.

We are dealing with the predictable results of a steady growth in the human population over the past century: changes in land cover that have altered the hydrology of our watersheds; increased demands on water for consumptive uses; and pollution that changes the quality of our water in harmful ways.

Overlay these with climate change, further anticipated growth, and a property rights movement that isn't going away, and we can see the depth and breadth of the challenge we face.

And we are stepping up to this challenge. Local governments are not helpless in addressing these fundamental problems, and in fact I feel they play a key role in resolving them. I feel local elected officials and governments in Washington are duty bound to bring a progressive and proactive approach to salmon recovery.

We have a range of powerful policy and programmatic tools to bring to bear creatively toward achieving harvestable, self-sustaining salmon populations.

These tools include:

- **The Growth Management Act** – This law is in many ways the cornerstone of local efforts to protect the habitats and habitat forming processes that are essential for the long term viability of all of our salmon. This Act was passed in Washington in 1990 with the aim of addressing uncoordinated and unplanned growth that posed a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the quality of life in Washington.

The GMA requires state and local governments to manage growth by identifying and protecting critical areas and natural resource lands, designating urban growth areas, preparing comprehensive plans and implementing them through capital investments and development regulations.

A key element of the Act was the establishment of the Urban Growth Areas that hold the line on growth in the rural and natural resources areas. By the time the existing Pacific Salmon Treaty was signed in 1999 many counties and cities had adopted their first Comprehensive Plans under this Act. Today 29 counties and 218 cities are managing growth comprehensively under the GMA.

- **The Shoreline Management Act** – This law was adopted by a public vote in 1972 and laid some of the groundwork for the Growth Management Act. It continues to play an important role in resource protection. Its focus is “to prevent the inherent harm in an uncoordinated and piecemeal development of the state’s shorelines.” It does this by encouraging uses of the shoreline that are water dependent, protecting the shoreline, and promoting the enjoyment of natural shorelines.

This law requires local governments to develop and implement Shoreline Master Programs. These programs regulate new development and use of shorelines along rivers and larger streams, lakes over 20 acres and marine waterfronts. These programs are opened for review and revision every seven years and we are in the middle of such a review in King County as we speak.

- **Clean Water Act compliance** – We have been working to protect and improve the quality of our lakes, rivers and streams with the guidance of this law since its passage in 1972. Both point and non-point pollution are addressed under this law.

In Washington the implementation of this law has become a partnership between the state and local governments. For jurisdictions like King County this translates to applying for and abiding by rigorous discharge permits for our wastewater, stormwater and roads maintenance programs. It can also involve working with federal and state agencies in the Total Daily Maximum Loading program to develop strategies for reducing specific pollutants in our surface waters.

- **Endangered Species Act response** – As a legal driver, the Endangered Species Act is perhaps more explicit than the others in its call for governments at all levels to take species conservation action. In Puget Sound we have been addressing ESA issues for salmon since 1998 and most recently our resident orcas have been added – not coincidentally, orcas are very dependent on salmon for their own viability.

In some cases this response has involved approaches that are more “letter-of-the-law”, meeting specific compliance obligations through Habitat Conservation Plans and formal consultations with the federal agencies.

In others the response has been less focused on compliance and more about implementing broader recovery-focused strategies and making significant expenditures that aren't narrowly prescribed in compliance agreements. Each type of ESA response offers a unique opportunity to restore and maintain salmon habitat.

- **Additional key habitat programs** – In addition to these four fundamental habitat policy tools, local governments implement a range of programs that can improve habitat in large and small ways. These programs include open space and parks acquisition and management programs that protect habitat and natural processes that create and sustain habitat over time.

They also include building, maintaining, and improving transportation infrastructure in ways that avoid, minimize or fix habitat impacts, for example replacing culverts that block fish passage.

(King County's Commitment to Salmon Habitat Stewardship)

I hope a clear picture is emerging of the prominent role local governments play in moving our salmon toward our goal of harvestable, sustainable populations. I think it would be particularly useful to give you more detailed insight into what King County government – one local government among hundreds in Puget Sound and Washington – is doing with our resources and authorities to bring our salmon back to robust health.

I was elected King County Executive in 1997. I came into office with a progressive environmental agenda that would ensure King County would provide a strong example for protecting and restoring our natural treasures as our population and economy grew.

There have been many challenges along the way, from Endangered Species Act listings to a crippling economic downturn that squeezed our budgets, but I believe today we can say we are providing this example.

And we are continuing to take significant political risks and make significant investments for salmon. Some examples of our actions include:

- **Implementing watershed-based salmon recovery plans –** King County helped develop and is playing a key role in implementing four watershed-based recovery plans for Chinook. These plans establish near and long term goals and priorities for actions that will get chinook populations in the Snohomish, Lake Washington, Green, and White watersheds on the trajectory to recovery.

These plans also are the result of unprecedented levels of coordination among local governments and stakeholders: over 40 local jurisdictions contributed to and have formally adopted the habitat priorities of these plans.

The robust and steady collaboration behind these plans has resulted in the average annual expenditure of over \$1 million dollars by each watershed toward habitat restoration projects, public stewardship and education programs, research, and other priority actions.

They also help King County direct upwards of \$15 million of local funds annually toward projects that directly benefit our salmon.

- **Implementing progressive Growth Management regulations** – The Growth Management Act has proven to be a powerful force for salmon in King County. Our comprehensive planning approach under GMA has helped us find ways to direct development pressure to areas that already have the infrastructure and facilities to handle a growing population, and to keep our rural and natural areas in tact.

And we have seen the results of our efforts: our data show that since the start of comprehensive planning in King County we have slowed growth in areas with critical functioning salmon habitat to about 4 percent from 12 percent of the countywide growth.

Key elements of our Growth Management program include new and stronger regulations for critical areas protection, stormwater management, and clearing and grading. As required by GMA, we just completed an update of these key regulations.

We undertook significant effort to update our habitat protection science, including a rigorous peer review process. We engaged the community in numerous work sessions and in heated public hearings to craft management solutions that work for landowners and for our natural resources. And most recently we successfully defended our policy decisions in three lawsuits that challenged the underpinnings of these regulations and our authority as a local government to develop and implement them.

We broke new ground with two unique elements of these regulations: Rural Stewardship Plans and Farm Management Plans. These site-specific plans provide rural residential and agricultural landowners great flexibility in meeting the requirements of the law and certainty that in using and enjoying their land they will not be running afoul of regulations.

And this is a win for our precious resources like salmon. We can't save salmon without providing big and small landowners the means to contribute to salmon recovery while maintaining their land and livelihoods.

- **Developing reclaimed water** – As the managers of the largest wastewater treatment system in Puget Sound we are helping drive advances in cleaning and recycling wastewater. By 2010 we will be reclaiming almost 10 percent of the base flow into our treatment facilities. This translates to millions of gallons of water every day that can substitute for water that would otherwise be taken from our rivers and streams. We are also making major investments in a new treatment plant that will use state-of-the-art bio-membrane treatment systems to clean our discharge into Puget Sound to almost drinking water quality.
- **Purchasing large areas of habitat** – Protecting lands that support habitat and habitat forming processes is a major focus for us. We have made hundreds of fee simple and conservation easement purchases that have protected thousands and thousands of acres.

And we have gone way beyond small-scale habitat acquisitions to buying up development rights on watersheds. For example, in 2004 we paid \$22 million for the development rights of the Snoqualmie Tree Farm.

This purchase protects 90,000 acres of timberlands in our most intact watershed in perpetuity. An important part of this story is that we had already preserved approximately 40,000 acres of open space around the county prior to that purchase. And we continue to explore opportunities to protect more habitat using acquisition.

- **Preparing for climate change** – We are taking head on one of the most daunting issues of my tenure: climate change. I believe it is the defining issue for humankind in the 21st Century. We are still at the early stages of understanding what climate change could mean for us, in terms of natural resources, public health and safety, transportation, and other fundamental aspects of our society, culture and quality of life.

But what we do know is that the science tells us we need to prepare for a range of probable and potential impacts. I believe that 50 years from now there will be communities that are winners and those that are losers. The winners will be the communities like ours that are taking action now to adapt to the expected changes that threaten harm to our environment, our health and our economy.

Over the past two years I have directed staff throughout King County government to learn as much we can about climate change impacts we face and to turn that knowledge into a plan for action. Last week we completed The King County Climate Change Preparedness Plan, the first such plan for any local government in the Pacific Northwest and among the first for any local government in the United States. First we must stop the growth of greenhouse gases and then we must do what the science tells us, which is to reduce our emissions by 80% below what they are today.

And I don't want to leave the impression that King County is alone among habitat managers in taking necessary actions. I understand that Sara Laborde is going to provide you the regional picture of priorities, actions and expenditures for salmon, so I won't do that here.

I think the message here is that habitat managers – in counties and cities and as part of watershed councils – are stepping up to the challenge with significant investments. And we know there is decades more important work to be done. We are in this to be successful in reaching our recovery goals.

(Maintaining the Momentum for Recovery)

Before I share a few ideas about how we can work together to ensure our management actions work effectively together in support of salmon recovery, I'd like to say a few words about maintaining our momentum for recovery.

Almost ten years after our first salmon listing under the ESA, and with the news of the approved Recovery Plan, I feel we have turned a corner in creating the sustained, collaborative effort that will be needed to rebuild our salmon stocks.

We've mobilized large and small landowners around salmon recovery goals, we are making difficult decisions on land use, and we are putting money behind our promises. But maintaining public support for recovering salmon is a major challenge that we all need to take seriously and never get complacent about.

Even today I hear people around the region say things like: "We can still buy salmon in the supermarket and grow them in hatcheries, so what's the problem?", or "We're paying that much money per returning fish!!?", or "Why are you restricting the use of my land to benefit salmon habitat when people are still allowed to catch and kill salmon?"

While we should never underestimate the importance of making wise and cost-effective investments and of the deeply held value of owning and enjoying land, I do look forward to the day when we hear these questions less often.

I fear that day is still a long way off. But there are a few things we can do now to minimize the doubts about the merit and value of our salmon recovery efforts. For example:

- **Keep salmon recovery a grass-roots value** – In King County and around the region citizens have taken ownership of salmon recovery in their neighborhoods and watersheds. It is difficult to see a path toward recovery that doesn't rely heavily on personal and community-based commitment.
- **Break down barriers between the "H's"** – The less we know about what you do, the easier it is for local habitat managers to assume the worst about harvest managers. And vice versa. We need to make it hard. By breaking down this barrier our recovery efforts are stronger and less vulnerable to "divide and conquer" tactics that will damage our ability to fund and implement recovery priorities. I believe our new H-

integration effort in Puget Sound is a great step forward, and I am looking forward to our watersheds achieving recovery strategies that link harvest, habitat and hatcheries at an unprecedented scale. And today's discussion will help as well toward breaking down this barrier. We need to do more to ensure our actions and their results are transparent to each other, to our funders, and to the public that wants us to succeed in recovery.

- **Reward success, learn from mistakes... and tell your constituents about both** – When faced with the breadth and depth and timeframe of the salmon recovery challenge it is easy to be overwhelmed or overlook the importance of small steps toward the goal. But who here doesn't like being told by your peers and people you respect and admire that you are doing a great job? It buoys our spirits and makes us excited to take on the next task.

It is equally important to be open and honest about where our commitments are not being met or our efforts are not bearing fruit as we had hoped. Our funders and the public are too smart to believe that everything is going to be perfect everywhere, all the time. They will trust us less if we try to get

them to believe that it is a smooth journey – we absolutely can't afford to sacrifice this trust. The work is hard and unprecedented, and it's a marathon not a sprint. We will be robbing ourselves of important opportunities to learn and improve our actions if we are not transparent and forthright.

(Challenges to the Treaty Negotiators and the Commission)

So now that you are all experts in the on-the-ground world of habitat management, I think it is the right time to share ideas on how we can work together to ensure our management actions work effectively together in support of salmon recovery.

In presenting these to you my intent is not to downplay the difficulties and complexities you face as harvest managers working to meet your responsibilities. Rather I think harvest, habitat, and hatchery managers can honor individual and shared struggles if we are open with ideas about where we can use help and where collaborative efforts are particularly urgent.

First, I think it is important to **recognize the significant investments and difficult choices habitat managers are making.**

Here are two ways to make this happen:

- Respecting the roles and protocols set forth in the Treaty, make a place for habitat managers in shaping and ensuring the success of the newly negotiated regimes. My visit with you today is just a hint of the possibilities. I am also aware of the efforts to form standing habitat-focused sub-committees within the Commission structure. I support taking this step and am willing to commit resources to making this real.
- Support the new program to protect and restore Puget Sound. We are on the verge of reshaping the way Puget Sound is managed and setting a new course for stewardship of this critical body of water.

This new course is badly needed and long overdue, but needs the support of people who rely on and enjoy the resources Puget Sound provides. I have joined with regional leaders including Congressman Dicks, Bill Ruckelshaus, and Billy Frank for almost two years to craft this new course.

Having the support of the harvest community would help ensure that the Puget Sound continues to play its fundamental ecological role in the health of so many of the salmon we catch and send back to spawn.

Second, I think it is important to **use the negotiation process to set habitat managers up for successful contributions to harvestable, sustainable salmon populations.** This can be done by:

- Negotiating agreements that are legally, economically and scientifically sound, and have clear logic about how they meet community goals for salmon harvest and recovery;
- Sending an abundance and quality of fish to our rivers and streams that will support the long term growth and health of our populations and make the most of our habitat investments;
- Communicating clearly and often with the public so they know how harvest managers are contributing to recovery and how their own salmon recovery efforts are making a difference;

- Updating the Strategic Plan for the Commission's Southern Fund so that it encourages actions that support the recovery priorities identified in the approved Chinook Recovery Plan.

And third, **support the establishment of a working group across harvest, habitat and hatchery managers to develop a Climate Change Preparedness Plan for Salmon Management.**

The more I learn about climate change the more I think all of our discussions about managing precious natural resources like salmon should start with a discussion about how we are going to prepare for and adapt to climate change.

In King County, scientists predict wetter warmer winters with more frequent and more destructive flooding. Less snowpack, means less water in our rivers during the summer and possibly lethal river water temperatures.

More frequent, more destructive flooding is fatal to salmon eggs and fry. We have integrated salmon habitat into our climate adaptation plan

For this region to be successful in sustaining our native salmon through foreseeable and unforeseeable climate impacts, it is essential for harvest managers to work in unison with habitat and hatchery managers to understand the issue and prepare ourselves to act and adapt.

We have to develop the science and solutions together. There is so much at stake here it would be hard to overstate the importance of timely coordinated action, and the time is now.

(Closing)

I want to leave you with my strongest encouragement to represent the interests of the fish and fishing interests with vigor and candor. I understand the gravity and significance of the task that you are undertaking and respect the knowledge and experience of salmon management in this room.

But that means assuring that the investments made in habitat will bear fruit over the years as there are enough healthy fish returning to populate it.

In the past several years, the people of Puget Sound have made great advances in our understanding of the urgency of salmon recovery and the amazing and intricate ways that salmon can connect King County neighborhoods and farms to villages in Alaska, fishing boats hundreds of miles out to sea, First Nation and Indian communities up and down the coast, and Canadians who for generations have enjoyed traditions of catching these fish.

I hope that I have painted a clear picture for you of the dedication to and high level of interest in salmon recovery in my corner of the salmon world.

King County's efforts are joined by many governments and people who will never get the opportunity to share their stories of successful action with you but they indeed are having success.

We all are hopeful that your work in advancing this Treaty into the next decade will energize recovery efforts by harvest, hatchery and habitat managers alike.

Anything less will be a missed opportunity by this generation to set an example of care and stewardship our children and grandchildren will cherish.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share my perspective. I wish you well in your important work, and I am happy to take your questions.