

Salmon 2100: A Proactive Strategy to Anchor and Restore the Priority Wild Salmon Ecosystems

Abstract

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Abstract: We must collectively adopt a bold salmon protection and restoration policy if significant, sustainable runs of wild salmon are to exist from British Columbia southward in 2100 and beyond. Despite concerted conservation initiatives in the U.S. and Canada, we have failed to sustain healthy populations of wild salmon in the North Atlantic and more recently in the southern and central parts of the northern Pacific Rim. Under the Endangered Species Act-driven salmon recovery process, we focus salmon funding and technical resources toward salmon populations at the greatest risk of extinction (i.e., those that have the lowest probability of recovering). Unless we direct our recovery and restoration funding toward priority salmon ecosystems, there is a strong possibility that continued human population growth, increasing resource scarcity and our globally-oriented economic system will drive most western North American wild salmon populations toward extinction. We propose a salmon sanctuary strategy that will protect and restore selected centers of salmon productivity and diversity in river basins located in each ecological region of western North America. The salmon sanctuary concept is a precautionary approach that proactively focuses initiative and resources on the permanent protection of the salmon ecosystems with the highest functionality, biodiversity, and inherent productivity -- the places and populations most likely to survive the threats they will face over the next 100 years.