

Fight ocean acidification: Yes on Washington Initiative 1631

In the mid-1980s, when I started seining with my dad for Fraser River sockeye, the Puget Sound fishery was already declining. But lately, the consequences of a fraying marine food web are spreading far beyond the fishing fleet. Living in Friday Harbor, I have a front row seat.

That's why I will vote for Washington's Initiative 1631 in November. This ballot measure will deeply reduce the biggest source of pollution that degrades our waters: carbon dioxide (CO2) from burning coal, oil, and gas.

I've experienced some of the harm firsthand. Local salmon stocks kept dwindling, so like many fishermen I migrated north. Now I fish in Bristol Bay, while back home whale-watching boats and yachts have replaced fish boats in the harbor. Now they are worried, too.

The endangered Southern Resident orca whales aren't getting enough fish to sustain themselves. These whales haven't successfully raised a calf in over three years.

Is anyone surprised? Our resident orcas eat almost exclusively Chinook salmon. Just since I was a teenager, catch and escapement of these fish have dropped by more than half. Chinook in Puget Sound are down to about 10 percent of historic levels.

Scientists say the young Chinook themselves may be starving, especially when they first enter the Sound. November's ballot measure offers a chance to tackle what might be the biggest problem - while we still can.

Carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels mixes into the water and acidifies Puget Sound. Scientists at the UW Labs in Friday Har-



Matt Marinkovich

bor have measured CO2-driven acidification at extremes that most marine waters aren't expected to see for generations. It is dissolving the shells of tiny floating snails called pteropods, a major prey for young salmon. High CO2 and warm waters are fueling toxic algae that displace nutritious plankton eaten by salmon. Toxic algae are also forcing harvest closures in Dungeness crab and shellfish beds. Scientists say the impacts will keep getting worse until

we confront the root cause.

Not every attempt to "cure" this problem deserves support from fishermen. Initiative 1631 does. It is a powerful and affordable tool to slash the underlying CO2 emissions.

Fishermen and tribal leaders intervened to improve this ballot measure, so resource-dependent coastal people get a fair shake. The Working Group on Seafood and Energy, the only fisheries trade association focusing on carbon emissions, endorsed the initiative and provided a lot of information for this article.

The measure will achieve deep emission cuts at low costs. It will also help fishermen and others afford to do their part, instead of just sticking them with a bigger fuel bill. This initiative will impose a modest "carbon price" on most fuels. Then it uses the money to fix the problem - investing it to help ordinary people boost fuel efficiency, reduce emissions, and adapt.

This is a much stronger, fairer approach than the "carbon tax" (and mistargeted revenue giveaway) that Washington voters rejected in 2016.

Initiative 1631's "price and invest" approach provides funding that communities and businesses can use to build solutions that also benefit local industries. The money can build cold storages in coastal communities to eliminate trucking fish hundreds of miles to facilities in urban centers; retrofit vessels and vehicles to make them more fuel-efficient; and protect carbon-storing forested watersheds to ensure stable water supplies and draw down carbon.

Fishermen and tribes insisted on strong measures to ensure carbon revenues won't be diverted and squandered. Now the initiative includes multiple layers of accountability, starting with the mechanism for collecting revenue: It's a fee, not a tax. Legally, that means the money can only be spent to reduce emissions or to help people adapt to the impacts.

Marine fuels are exempt from the extra carbon price, so fishermen won't pay a dime more at the fuel dock. Other fuels will be charged \$15 per ton of carbon (around 14 cents a gallon of gas or diesel). That price rises at \$2 (per ton) a year, with the proceeds invested in solutions. The price stops rising in 2035 if the state is hitting its emission targets, which it should, since most of the money will go directly into emission reductions.

This fee-based policy makes way more sense than the "carbon tax" voters rejected in 2016. This time, the initiative won't give away money for tax breaks for big business and unfocused "rebates" to low-income people. Instead, Initiative 1631 dedicates the revenue to actually fix the problem - isn't that where the money should go?

Washington isn't going it alone. Dozens of countries (including China) and state and local governments that represent about half the world economy have already enacted similar "price-and-invest"

Continued on Page 7

PORT TOWNSEND SHIPWRIGHTS
*A full service yard servicing the
NW fishing fleet for over three decades.*

wood ~ aluminum ~ steel ~ systems

360-385-6138 www.ptshipwrights.com
Facebook icon /PortTownsendShipwrightsCoop

Salmon hatcheries support Alaskans, feed the world

When the Good Friday earthquake shook Alaska in 1964, the damage wasn't confined to buildings and homes. In some coastal areas, the land and ocean floor were uplifted, dramatically impacting the productivity of aquatic habitat for decades.

For the fishing towns of Cordova and Valdez, the fertile salmon spawning grounds of Prince William Sound all but dried up. But this wasn't the end of the story.

The people of Cordova created the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp. (PWSAC). The nonprofit transformed an old cannery at Port San Juan into a prolific wild salmon hatchery. As U.S. Sen. Ted Stevens recalled in the late 1970s, "In desperation, the community of Cordova banded together to build a major fish hatchery, which was one of the greatest community projects I have ever witnessed in Alaska."

Around the same time, the Alaska Legislature introduced the Fisheries Rehabilitation, Enhancement, and Development (FRED) Division within the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and funding was provided to the department to construct hatchery facilities across the state and to staff them. Through the 1970s and '80s, FRED and the Sport Fish Division collaborated on a number of projects statewide to improve opportunities for commercial and sport users.

Shortly after opening the hatchery in 1974, PWSAC recorded the largest salmon run of any hatchery in the world. The Alaska seafood industry was once again working to meet the demands of the global marketplace, as well as support the coastal economies of Prince William Sound.

In 1980, Valdez leaders in fisheries and business founded Valdez Fisheries Development Association Inc. and built the Solomon Gulch Hatchery in Port Valdez in an effort to support the Valdez economy. The Solomon Gulch Hatchery would later become a consistent producer of early-run pink salmon as well as coho salmon, extending the common property fishery as well as significantly expanding sport fishing opportunities in Valdez. This also led to the development of the annual silver salmon derby in Valdez, which has become an economic boon for the community.

Hatcheries are the solution Alaska's founders intended for us to cultivate decades ago, when fishing politics of the 1970s differed little from the fish wars waged today. Back then, there was still a strong desire to work together. When salmon runs collapsed, a group of individuals representing various user groups joined to find ways to not only save our wild salmon but help them flourish – all while remaining dedicated to the environment and the sustainability of Alaska's fisheries.

Fluctuating fish runs caused by natural cycles offer little stability for Alaska's salmon users. Fisheries are the second-largest contributor to Alaska's economy after oil and gas, and history has found hatcheries provide reliable and sustainable salmon returns for all users.

Whether your favorite means of fishing is sport, subsistence, personal use, or you depend on commercial fishing for your livelihood, hatchery-raised salmon have likely benefited you and your family. Recently, hatcheries have also divided those who depend on salmon across our state. While some concerns should be addressed and in many cases are, this is diverting our focus from finding new solutions to promote sustainable fisheries enhancement in Alaska.

Today, Alaska's economy is thriving due to the foresight of many before us, and today many users depend on our fisheries enhancement programs. Hatcheries generate hundreds of millions of dollars in annual economic output, from commercial, sport, and



subsistence fishing revenue. The hatchery program is a solution endowed to us by early Alaskans to meet the challenges of Alaska's seafood industries and sustainably provide for the world's strong demand for Alaska wild salmon. We should be working together to continuously improve our program as we learn more about the natural environment and human interactions with it.

Currently, there are many research projects related to Alaska salmon. In one major project, ADF&G and industry are studying genetics, the scope of straying of hatchery-raised salmon, and population fitness of interacting hatchery and wild salmon. This project was developed to better help understand our salmon ecosystem in a way not possible before. Results of this study will chart a new path for Alaska salmon, and the Alaska hatchery program.

Research has found that hatcheries present a rare opportunity to supplement our natural resources while limiting impacts to the environment that supports our fisheries. One of the biggest challenges facing Alaska's salmon resource is that we love it too much. It is clear that the demand for Alaska's wild salmon by all users is greater than what the natural environment can support. New solutions and research will be needed to determine how to sustain these runs as demand continues to increase and the environment continues to change.

Innovation and determination are the lifeblood of Alaska, as was etched in history by hardy Alaskans like those survivors of the 1964 earthquake. Thanks to them – along with Ted Stevens and other visionary leaders in Alaska's fisheries – the state's hatcheries play a vital role in ensuring the promise to future generations that they, too, can enjoy and benefit from healthy salmon stocks.

To fulfill that promise, we must work together and rely on sound science. So, grab your pole, grab your net, and help us carry on a tradition older than Alaska itself. ↓

Casey Campbell is CEO of Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corp. Mike Wells is CEO of Valdez Fisheries Development Association Inc. Learn more about salmon hatcheries statewide at salmonhatcheriesforak.org.

Marinkovich continued from Page 6

policies. That's the kind of teamwork it takes to make a difference.

Killer whales and fishermen share a common interest in making sure the ocean can continue to support the fish we hunt. We need a strong, fair policy that will cut emissions. We need a policy like Washington's Initiative 1631. ↓

Matt Marinkovich grew up fishing sockeye salmon on Puget Sound, fishes Bristol Bay today, and runs Matt's Fresh Fish, selling direct to consumers and restaurants. He is an active advocate for a healthy Salish Sea.