

Jim Lichatowich Statement on the Sandy River Hatchery Program

One hundred and thirty-five years ago management agencies adopted a myth as the foundation for their stewardship of Pacific salmon. At the heart of this myth is the assumption that natural, salmon-sustaining ecosystems can be replaced by industrial production systems using hatcheries—or, as they were called in the early years, fish factories. The myth made it not only possible but highly rational to trade habitat for fish factories. The consequence has been failure on a massive scale. Salmon are now extinct in 40 percent of their historical range in the Pacific Northwest and in most of the remaining range they are under the protection of the federal Endangered Species Act. Some of the damage done by the exchange of habitat for fish factories is being corrected. Marmot Dam on the Sandy River has come down. However, changing the myth has proven to be much more difficult. It persists and is still driving salmon management decisions. When government agencies make decisions that are ill advised or not consistent with existing science, citizens can and should ask the courts to render a “second opinion.” It’s well known that second opinions can be important to personal health, but they are also important where the health of ecosystems, rivers and salmon populations is concerned.

Jim Lichatowich has worked on Pacific salmon issues as a researcher, manager, and scientific advisor for 40 years. He specializes in the history of salmon management and the life history and status of salmon and steelhead populations and the development of restoration plans in the Pacific Northwest. Jim was formerly the Chief of Fisheries Research and Assistant Chief of Fisheries for the State of Oregon. He served ten years on the Independent Scientific Advisory Board for the Columbia River salmon restoration program. He served four years on the State of Oregon’s Independent Multidisciplinary Science Team. He has served on four independent scientific review panels for the California Bay-Delta Authority.

Jim has worked with organizations such as the Oregon Business Council, Bonneville Power Administration, Oregon Trout, Native Fish Society, The North Umpqua Foundation, EcoTrust, Portland General Electric, The Wilderness Society, Pacific Rivers Council, Trout Unlimited, and the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe.