

A review by
Matt Murphy

SALMON, PEOPLE AND PLACE

A Biologist's Search for Salmon Recovery

IN 1990 we at Sherkin Island Marine Station organised a three-day international workshop, inviting ten fish biologists to discuss "The Effects of Stocked Salmon and Cage Escapees on Resident Wild Salmon Stocks". We published the concerns and recommendations from the workshop and 23 years on they are still relevant. One of the invited biologists was Jim Lichatowich, a habitat fish biologist for the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, a Native American tribe from the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State, USA. His then job was to check on logging operations across the northern Olympic Peninsula as part of Washington State's Timber, Fish and Wildlife Program. He, along with other Tribal and State biologists, reviewed proposed timber harvests and recommend measures to protect stream habitats.

In informal chats during Jim's stay at the Marine Station, he told me of the damage done by clear cut logging of waste forest areas in the Peninsula by multi-national companies and how it had destroyed the salmon habitats in many streams. I soon learned that Jim had no hidden agenda, his only concern was the future of the Pacific Salmon. Over the next few years we published 17 wonderful articles written by Jim on the Pacific salmon and trout, with such titles as "The Value of a Single World Fish", "It's the Economics, Mr. President", "A Question of Values".

In 1993 I was privileged to visit this remarkable person and his beloved wife Paulette in the Olympic Peninsula. There I saw for myself the horrendous damage done by clear cut logging. One day we stood on high ground and for miles around us we saw vast areas of desolate hillside divested of trees. I wondered then who was more in the wrong, the logging company or the State of Washington that gave them the permission



Jim Lichatowich in 1993.

to do such a clear fell. Near Jim's house, outside the city of Sequim, the forest was untouched. There old trees abounded and to just touch them was a miracle in itself. During that visit I learned more and more about this extraordinary man who from his earliest days as a biologist has dedicated his life to protecting the Pacific salmon.

Jim has written two books on the subject: the first in 1999 *Salmon without Rivers – A History of the Pacific Salmon Crisis*. It includes the evolutionary history of the salmon, the destruction of the salmon's habitat, the development of the commercial fishery, the salmon canning industry and the History of the Salmon hatcheries. The latest book *Salmon, People and Place – A Biologist's Search for Salmon Recovery* has recently been published in the US by Oregon State University Press. The story of this new book is in two parts: Part 1 has four chapters that describe the Pacific salmon's problem, what is preventing salmon recovery and why the billions of dollars spent on wild salmon restoration programmes have not been effective. Part 2 describes what needs to be done to remove the impediments to salmon recovery.



A stream near Jim's former home on Washington's Olympic Peninsula.

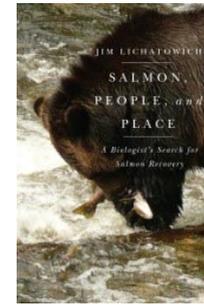
The book draws on his experiences throughout his career. Scientists and bureaucrats will find his commonsense hard to take. In his chapter on The Meeting, he talks of attending a meeting concerning the salmon on the Columbia River. He said "I've been listening for forty five minutes and the word salmon is not among those being carefully released into the room. The talk is about budgets, authorities, future funding, and who should have a seat at the table. Those subjects are important to the institutions these men and women represent and they must believe they are also important to the salmon, but I have my doubts."

He addresses recovery plans for the salmon. About ninety years ago the first plan for Pacific Northwest was produced. Ever since a recovery plan has been part of salmon management. He suggests that given the number of recovery plans produced one could conclude that the Pacific Salmon is the most restored species group in the world. Obviously he says most of these recovery plans failed to achieve their goal. From his experience of reading past and present plans he asks five questions that each new plan must

answer. Did the author:

- demonstrate that they understand what actions were proposed in the earlier recovery plans for the same or similar salmon populations and watersheds?
- explain why the earlier recovery actions either succeeded or failed?
- describe how their plan will avoid the mistakes and failures of the past?"
- show that the agency has an organisation structure capable of implementing all the elements of the plan?
- describe who is responsible for carrying out all task and how their workloads would be shifted to accommodate the new duties?

The chapter "A Look at the Year 2150" he takes an imaginary journey forward a hundred years in time and thinking about what he might find. His fishing companion is Charlie, his great, great, great... grandson and they set out to visit the Ben Franklin Regional Water Centre on the river Columbia as he is really anxious to see the river. It was a special part of his entire life, it was a friend and a refuge where solitude and contemplation came easy. As they drive he sees familiar signs in the landscape that signal the approaching river, but the river



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is not where it should be. They arrive at the Water Centre and then when they enter the main buildings with its series of displays and brief film they learn the river and other rivers do not exist. They were replaced by "an efficient, engineered water capture and delivery system". The full story makes stark reading. Will it happen? More probable than possible with man's lust for water. Then ask yourself could a similar centre evolve here in Ireland in the year 2150?

Jim is very critical of hatcheries. He calls them fish factories and states that "the ecological costs for each hatchery should be assessed using information currently in the literature, applying it to specific hatcheries with conservative assumptions and analysis. This should include some of the following steps:

- Quantify risks to wild populations for all hatcheries. Describes the acceptable tradeoffs in natural production and the monitoring program that will ensure the tradeoffs will not be exceeded.
- The impacts of hatchery programs should be reported as life stage survival rates of affected wild populations.
- Each year determine the

cost to produce a harvested fish from each hatchery program and provide that information in a form accessible to the public.

- Adopt a stock transfer policy that prohibits moving fish and eggs between watersheds.
- Use the latest scientific information regarding hatchery impacts on wild salmon to develop a set of standards for hatchery operations. Those hatcheries that cannot meet the standards within three to five years should be closed. The standards should be peer reviewed before implementation."

All those that have an interest in the well-being of wild salmon must read this book. It is hoped that by doing so they will take an objective look at where they stand in their work with wild salmon. Many will have to change their thinking if the wild salmon is firstly to survive and then prosper. That could be the hardest challenge as so often scientists, administrators and anglers believe they will lose face if they change their viewpoint. If they do not then Jim's chapter "A Look at the Year 2150" will become a reality. This is an incredibly important book; it is a classic and will become the reference on wild salmon for many decades to come.

Jim Lichatowich is a unique fish biologist. Above all he is a naturalist and follows in the footsteps of Aldo Leopold whom he describes as "one of the most influential spokesperson for conservation". Leopold's book "A Sandy County Almanac" (1966) has inspired Jim Lichatowich throughout his career.

Finally let us ponder on these words from his book: "We enthusiastically accept the gift of salmon, but failed to treat it with the respect it deserves. We failed to meet our obligation to return the gift in the way that only humans can. We failed to return the gift of salmon with the gift of stewardship."



Matt Murphy in 1993 showing the girth of one of the magnificent trees in the Olympic Peninsula.



The vast forest landscape of the Washington's Olympic Peninsula.



Clear cut logging in 1993 on the Peninsula, a practice which had destroyed the salmon habitats in many streams.