

Unpublished Lessons Learned from the Salmon 2100 Project



Robert T. Lackey
Oregon State University

Mat-Su Symposium - Wasilla
November 7, 2012

Unpublished Lessons Learned from the Salmon 2100 Project



Robert T. Lackey
Oregon State University

Mat-Su Symposium - Wasilla
November 7, 2012

PNW Wild Salmon 2100 Forecast

Quick Review

Given:

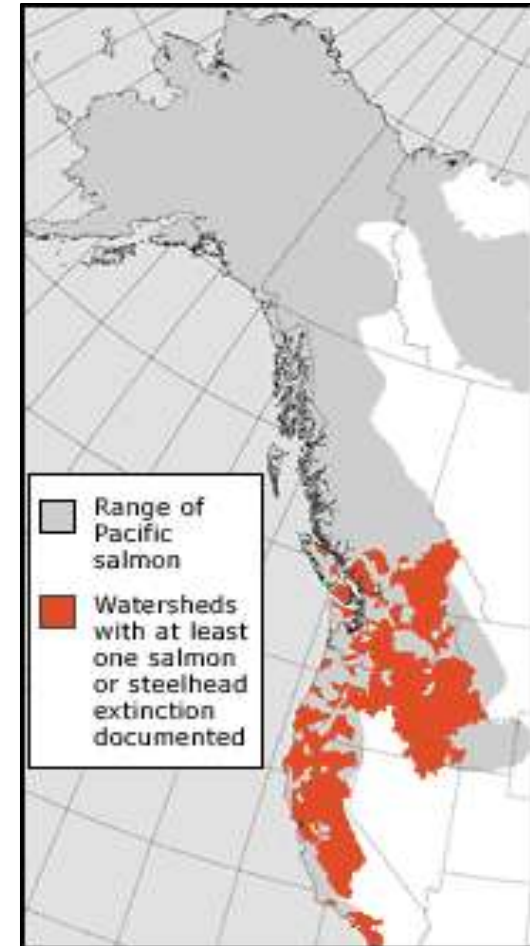
- Near-certain growth of the human population in the PNW
- Unlikelihood that society will accept the enormous life style changes necessary to perpetuate — much less restore — wild salmon

Then . . .



PNW Wild Salmon 2100 Forecast

- Restoring “fishable” runs of wild salmon in California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho is unlikely
- Only “remnant” runs of wild salmon will remain in PNW “coastal” rivers
- Status of southern BC is “mixed”



What were the surprising results from the Salmon 2100 Project?



Feedback from professionals to the salmon 2100 forecast!



Fisheries experts (~50) formally reviewed the report



Many others offered comments, both before and after

Typical feedback from professionals:

- Analytically sound; realistic; accurate



Typical feedback from professionals:

- Analytically sound; realistic; accurate
- **Conservative forecast; already the situation in PNW**



Typical feedback from professionals:

- Analytically sound; realistic; accurate
- Conservative forecast; already the situation in PNW
- **Not optimistic, but it captures society's priorities**



Typical feedback from professionals:

- Analytically sound; realistic; accurate
- Conservative forecast; already the situation in PNW
- Not optimistic, but it captures society's priorities
- **Sobering, but most realistic forecast for 2100**



Typical feedback from professionals:

- Analytically sound; realistic; accurate
- Conservative forecast; already the situation in PNW
- Not optimistic, but it captures society's priorities
- Sobering, but most realistic forecast for 2100



But some professionals reacted differently . . .

Most reviewers agreed with the basic conclusion and forecast, *but . . .*

"The message is correct, but it is too pessimistic."

Most reviewers agreed with the basic conclusion and forecast, *but . . .*

"You need to look for a way to tell the story more optimistically."

Most reviewers agreed with the basic conclusion and forecast, *but . . .*

"Such a pessimistic message isn't fair to all those fisheries biologists in the trenches trying to do their best to save salmon."

Most reviewers agreed with the basic conclusion and forecast, *but . . .*

"Guess you're not trying to win a popularity contest."

Most reviewers agreed with the basic forecast and conclusion, *but . . .*

How can reviewers agree — but push to “soften” or “spin” the message?

Why?

Some possible explanations

- Pressure from **employers** — *job security/advancement?*



Some possible explanations

- Pressure from employers — *job security/advancement?*
- Pressure from **colleagues** — *group think?*



Some possible explanations

- Pressure from employers — *job security/advancement?*
- Pressure from colleagues — *group think?*
- Pressure from **society** — *mental well-being?*



Some possible explanations

- Pressure from employers — *job security/advancement?*
- Pressure from colleagues — *group think?*
- Pressure from society — *mental well-being?*
- **Personal values** — *reconciliation with political reality?*



What approach should “scientists” use to convey policy-relevant information?

- **Realism** — *avoid either optimism or pessimism*



What approach should “scientists” use to convey policy-relevant information?

- Realism — *avoid either optimism or pessimism*
- **Clarity** — *state the message understandably*



What approach should “scientists” use to convey policy-relevant information?

- Realism — *avoid either optimism or pessimism*
- Clarity — *state the message understandably*
- **Policy neutrality** — **shun policy advocacy**



What approach should “scientists” use to convey policy-relevant information?

- Realism — *avoid either optimism or pessimism*
- Clarity — *state the message understandably*
- Policy neutrality — *shun policy advocacy*
- **Democracy** — *society weighs competing priorities*



Too naive?

Delusional Reality!



What is the appeal of perpetuating delusion reality?



What is the appeal of perpetuating delusion reality?

- Job security — *full employment act for profession!*



What is the appeal of perpetuating delusion reality?

- Job security — *full employment act for profession!*
- Mental health — *there is a cost to swimming upstream!*



What is the appeal of perpetuating delusion reality?

- Job security — *full employment act for profession!*
- Mental health — *there is a cost to swimming upstream!*
- Policy advocacy — *helps push personal agendas!*



What is the appeal of perpetuating delusion reality?

- Job security — *full employment act for profession!*
- Mental health — *there is a cost to swimming upstream!*
- Policy advocacy — *helps push personal agendas!*
- Career advancement — *don't forget your spouse and kids!*



Final thought for scientists . . .

"Tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing more, and nothing less."





Robert T. Lackey

Dr. Bob Lackey is professor of fisheries science and adjunct professor of political science at Oregon State University. In 2008 he retired from the Environmental Protection Agency's research laboratory in Corvallis where, over a 27 year career, he served in various senior science and leadership jobs. Since his very first fisheries job ago mucking out raceways in a California trout hatchery, he has worked on an array of natural resource issues from various positions in government and academia. His professional assignments involved diverse aspects of natural resource management, but mostly you would find him at the interface between science and policy. He has published over 100 articles in scientific journals and authored or edited 5 books. Dr. Lackey has long been an educator, having taught at 5 North American universities. He continues to teach an on-campus and an on-line graduate course in ecological policy at Oregon State University. A U.S./Canada dual citizen, he was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Northern British Columbia during the 1999-2000 academic year. Dr. Lackey holds a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Fisheries and Wildlife Science from Colorado State University and was selected as the 2001 Honored Alumnus by their College of Natural Resources. He is a Certified Fisheries Scientist and a Fellow in the American Institute of Fishery Research Biologists. In 2008 he was awarded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's highest honor — the Gold Medal — for exceptional contributions in strengthening the role of science in ecological policy.

Robert T. Lackey
Department of Fisheries and Wildlife
Oregon State University
Corvallis, Oregon 97331

VOICE: (541) 737-0569
CELL: (541) 602-5904
FAX: (541) 737-1980
EMAIL: Robert.Lackey@oregonstate.edu
WEB: <http://oregonstate.edu/dept/fw/lackey/>

