

Salmon Nation: It's a new way of thinking

Think you know where you stand? Take another look. There's a new common ground forming right beneath our feet.

If there's one thing we all share, it's that we care about this place. And we'd like it to be as rich for our grandchildren as it's been for us.

The foundation of this place, the glue that holds it together, is its salmon. Not only do they feed us and support a centuries-old commercial fishery, but they feed the land as well. Trees in the forest depend on the nitrogen that salmon carry back to land from their ocean journey. Animals benefit, too: scientists have found that at least 137 species rely on salmon as part of their diet.

Beyond that, salmon are a symbol of what it means to live in this corner of the world, on our home turf that stretches from California up to Alaska.

If you listen closely, you'll find that this land has something to tell us. The living is good here for all of us: citizens of Salmon Nation.

SALMON NATION

live like you mean it



Consider this crazy idea:

What if we poured our wastewater back into the river upstream of the pipes that feed our water supply? Of course, no one would design a system like that; but in a sense, that's what happens all the time. We can't really throw anything away, because on this spherical planet of ours, there is no "away." See those oil drips under the car at the curb? The next time it rains, they'll be washed down the sewer and on into the nearest stream. All the scattered contamination — the "non-point-source pollution" that comes from many little sources — is one of the biggest challenges to clean water in our cities. Whether we swim in it, drink it, or catch fish from it, we might as well be putting our treated sewage back into the river above our water intakes. One way or another, it comes back.

Used to be, I only cared about my own backyard. Then I found out how big my backyard really is.

we all live downstream

Go for a hike in the woods and you'll see: the forests of this region are simply immense. Scientists have measured ancient groves along the coast between San Francisco and Anchorage and found that acre for acre, the organic matter in them outweighs that of any other forest in the world. And the bounty of our region doesn't end there. The accumulated soils of our farmlands, from the Willamette Valley to the rolling hills of the Palouse, have fed us and provided a cornucopia we can share with our neighbors. Most years, we have so much water that the drinking fountains on

I thought we were going to run out of stuff. But dude, it's all about how we use it.



Portland streets run 24-7. The power of the sun and wind could light our homes and fuel our industry, if only we'd make the effort to capture it. The bounty of this land astounds.

there is enough for everyone



There was a time I bought whatever was cheapest. These days I'm looking a little closer.

Everything you eat was once alive, from the wild salmon fillet on your plate to the crisp apple in your lunch.

know the story and help yourself

Each mouthful comes from a specific place and passed through many hands for you to enjoy. In this modern world, it's sometimes hard to read the story through the plastic wrap. But the stories are there nonetheless. Knowing them can make our food taste sweeter. If you stop to think about it, the same is true of everything in your house, from the chair you're sitting in to the water that flows from the faucet. Hopefully, the things around you are telling stories you want to hear. If they are, it's one more reason to be thankful for what you have. And if they aren't, wouldn't you want to know?

Imagine being out in the cold Pacific Ocean, and picking a river mouth from among the hundreds of possibilities. Nobody knows exactly how they do it, but almost all salmon find their way back to where their lives began. There's a purpose to their pickiness: salmon have adapted to each river's challenges and advantages. For example, since salmon stop eating once they leave the ocean, the ones headed farther inland store more fat for their journey than coastal fish do. And salmon are quick learners. In about 50 years



I've finally realized I've got something to offer.

— 13 salmon generations — their bodies can physically change to meet new opportunities. Of course, salmon aren't the only animals that adapt. We, too, are shaped by the places where we live, and the unique

our experience makes the difference

stories of our lives. We each have special gifts to offer our families, our neighborhoods, our cities.

I always thought I was just passing through. But now I feel at home here.



Take a peek underneath the bridge that crosses the Columbia at The Dalles. In certain

you're right where you belong

seasons of the year you'll see a handful of men on slippery wooden platforms dipping their nets into the swirling river. They're fishing for salmon, which in itself is pretty common in these parts. What's worth mentioning is that people have fished at more or less this same spot for generations — longer than the dam has stood at The Dalles, longer than the boats on this river have flown the Stars and Stripes, longer in fact than people anywhere in the world have been using metal tools. It's no wonder they stayed: this is one special place. So special that it has attracted a constant flow of immigrants, on into the 21st century. If you are from here, you've probably felt how deep your roots run. And if you are a newer arrival, you know how it draws us close.



• Know your history • Expect transparency • Promote the common good • Pursue connections • There are no bystanders

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