

The New York Times

Opinion

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The Salmon Problem

To the Editor:

Your April 15 editorial "The Trouble with Salmon" is correct that closure of the West Coast commercial fishing season is necessary. It then reiterates familiar rhetoric: blaming the Bush administration, dams, water withdrawals and so on for the problem.

The salmon "problem" has persisted through several administrations, and in rivers with and without dams. The demise of salmon in the Columbia-Snake River Basin was narrowly averted as far back as the 1890s, when massive over-fishing was the problem.

Political parties and dams make convenient targets; however, other factors come heavily into play. New science now shows ocean conditions to be a huge, unpredictable factor, over which we humans have no control.

We need to look beyond the convenient, usual suspects and take a more holistic approach if we are to truly solve the salmon problem.

Terry Flores

Portland, Ore., April 16, 2008

The writer is executive director of Northwest River Partners, an alliance of river users concerned with science-based salmon recovery.