Commercial and recreational fishing jobs are important contributors to Washington’s coastal economy. With Seattle up to six hours away from some ports, the coast of Washington is about as rural as it gets. As in Eastern Washington’s rural farming communities, remote coastal locations have the challenge of keeping communities vital and thriving. Rural communities don’t have the alternative job opportunities of urban centers.\textsuperscript{i} In November of 2019 the unemployment rates in coastal counties were among the highest in Washington.\textsuperscript{ii} Pacific County had the third highest unemployment rate at 7.4\% and Grays Harbor was in a four-way tie for fifth highest unemployment.

For decades fishing has provided living wage jobs in coastal regions of Washington where there are few other economic engines. A 2017 study of the economic impacts of Washington State’s maritime sector showed in 2015 commercial fishing and seafood processing was the largest subsection of the maritime industry.\textsuperscript{iii} The same study showed Chinook salmon contributed $19.2 million in value. The average economic impact of commercial and recreational salmon fishing from 2012 to 2015 on Washington’s economy can be seen in Figure 1. But the salmon that made fishing jobs profitable have steadily thinned in numbers, taking with them the jobs that used to employ fishermen and guides; workers in seafood processing plants; and many of the industries that service the fishing fleet—fuel docks; fishing gear stores; boat and engine repair businesses; grocery stores; restaurants and bars; and marinas to name a few.

![Exhibit C: Commercial & Recreational Salmon Fisheries Economic Impacts - Averages for 2012 to 2015](image)

\textit{Figure 1\textsuperscript{iv} Source: Economic Impacts of Pacific Salmon Fisheries}
Looking Back: Some Numbers from the Troll Fleet that Help Tell the Story

In 1978, there were 3041 salmon fishermen operating salmon trollers in the coastal waters of Washington State (Figure 2). Trollers are small, ocean going boats that catch fish one at a time on hook and line gear. By 2018, the number had fallen to 102 boats.

If you are to consider these lost jobs in terms of economic value, from 1971 to 1975, the salmon catch of the troll fishery was valued at an average of $21.8 Million annually (Figure 3). In 2018 the catch was worth $2.35 million or 90% less in economic value for the fishermen who called the rural, coastal communities of Washington home. These numbers provide evidence that the commercial fishing fleet of salmon trollers has had its share of hardship and suffered severe losses over the last fifty years. These numbers do not include losses suffered by the fishermen who fish in rivers and catch salmon using nets of various types; the tribal fishermen who fish alongside the nontribal fishermen; or recreational fishing businesses and guides that are hired by outdoor enthusiasts to help them catch salmon and steelhead. Fishermen of all types watched their fleets and opportunity to make a living reduced along with the salmon numbers.
These numbers also support the fact that reduction in harvest alone won’t offer solutions. The healthy, connected habitat that salmon recovery requires is available in the form of a free flowing lower Snake River and restored access to the immense intact watershed upstream.

![Figure 3, Source: Economic Impacts of Pacific Salmon Fisheries](image)

**State of Washington Department of Fisheries Annual Report for 1949**

At least as early as 1949, fisheries managers anticipated the harmful effect of hydropower development in the Snake River Basin. “The Snake River fish producing area supplies more than one-half of the total Columbia River fish run.” The *State of Washington Department of Fisheries Annual Report for 1949* is unambiguous in its opposition to building the four lower Snake River dams because of the devastating impact the dams were predicted to have on Snake River-origin fisheries as well as the communities that rely on fishing jobs. Instead, the 1949 report recommends scientists’ guidance on how to balance power development while maintaining salmon production.
In 1949 the Washington Department of Fisheries took the position that, “if salmon are to be preserved, development wherever possible must be confined to non-fish producing rivers. The question has been, can this be accomplished without crippling expansion of the Pacific Northwest economy? The answer is yes, that there is hydroelectric power available in non-producing streams today equal to two or three times the current output of the Northwest power pool.”

The following section from the 1949 report addresses the tradeoffs between two important industries, fishing and power. Note, at the time of the report the farming industry was yet to benefit from the dammed Snake River:

“Another serious threat to the Columbia river fishery is the proposed construction by the U.S. Army Engineers of Ice Harbor and three other dams on the lower Snake river between Pasco, Wash., and Lewiston, Idaho, to provide slackwater navigation and a relatively minor block of power. The development would remove part of the cost of waterborne shipping from the shipper and place it on the taxpayer,
jeopardizing more than one-half of the Columbia river salmon production in exchange for 148 mile of subsidized barge route. The transportation ‘savings’ to the shipper would amount to [$]32,000,000 annually, while salmon runs having a wholesale value of about [$]9,000,000 would be threatened with destruction.”

“This policy of water development, the department maintains, is not in the best interest of the over-all economy of the state. Salmon must be protected from the type of unilateral thinking that would harm one major industry to benefit another. Long-range planning in which federal and state agencies work together cooperatively, to the end that the fishery or any other industry is not discriminated against, is a fairer method of approach.”

The report was also cautionary on the use of hatcheries to replace salmon production lost because of the four lower Snake River dams. In discussion of salmon, power and ‘compensatory hatchery installations’ the managers state, “In no way, however, can these be regarded as a complete substitution for the natural environment.” The report later adds “Another factor is this: the production capacity of the hatcheries would be infinitesimal compares to the stream production of such a river as the Snake.”

**Commercial Salmon Fishing: Things You May Not Know, Challenges Faced**

If you don’t work as a fisherman or know one, the chances are that you are unfamiliar with the day-to-day responsibility of owning a fishing business or the challenges fishermen face on the water.

**Fishing Permits: Who Owns Them?**

- Washington salmon fishing permits are only allowed to by owned by individuals not companies, making each boat a small scale, food producing business.
- The owner of a salmon fishing permit must be on the boat when it is fishing.

**Working On the Water**

- Fishermen participating in Washington Commercial Ocean Salmon Fisheries work alone or with one other person on the boat.
- Fishermen work 3 to 70 miles off shore and are away from shore for up to 7 days a week.
- Washington’s Ocean Salmon Fishing grounds are intersected by the international and coastal shipping lanes, creating a high-risk work situation for this small boat fishery particularly at night when boats are far off shore.

**The Catch**

- Washington’s coastal salmon fisheries focus on Chinook, also known as king salmon, and coho, sometimes called silver salmon.
- The number of salmon a fisherman can catch changes each year and is based on the health of the individual species of salmon and specific salmon runs.
• Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife closely manages the salmon fishing week to week and makes in-season adjustments to protect the fish.
• Fishing can be closed at any time with only 24 hours notice. Closures may last for a few days or weeks or until the following year.
• In the 2019, the number of salmon that fishermen participating in Washington Commercial Ocean Salmon Fisheries were allowed to catch often ranged between 20 – 120 fish per week.

Value of the Catch
• At seafood counters in 2019, Washington troll caught Chinook salmon were observed to have a value of anywhere from $19.99 to $37.00 per pound.
• At the beginning of the 2019 fishing season, Washington fishermen received $8.00 - $9.50 per pound for Chinook salmon and by the end of season the value had dropped to $3.50 - $6.00.\(^{\text{xiii}}\)
• While the price per pound received by the fishermen dropped the retail price, for the most part, remained the same throughout the season.
• A bad fishing season means boat maintenance may get deferred until the next year. This means less work for trades people that work on boats and potentially dangerous work situations for fishermen on the water.

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\text{If you have questions about commercial salmon fishing in Washington State, contact:}
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\(^{\text{viii}}\) Alvin Anderson, State of WA Dept of Fisheries Annual Report for 1949, see map p.5
\(^{\text{ix}}\) Alvin Anderson, State of WA Dept of Fisheries Annual Report for 1949, p.2
\(^{\text{x}}\) Alvin Anderson, State of WA Dept of Fisheries Annual Report for 1949, p.3 - 4
\(^{\text{xi}}\) Alvin Anderson, State of WA Dept of Fisheries Annual Report for 1949, p.2
\(^{\text{xii}}\) Alvin Anderson, State of WA Dept of Fisheries Annual Report for 1949, p.7
\(^{\text{xiii}}\) Information from a fisherman’s WDFW Fish tickets