

Lorraine Loomis Act for Salmon Recovery



2022 SESSION GOAL:

Pass policy that protects, restores, and maintains habitat for salmon recovery

The Lorraine Loomis Act for Salmon Recovery campaign advocates for habitat protection and restoration to increase salmon populations in Washington. During the 2022 legislative session, we are supporting Tribes' calls for the necessary steps to restore abundant salmon for future generations.

The Act must:

- Require zones around rivers and streams with tall trees and vegetation that are wide enough to keep waters cool
- Establish the Riparian Habitat Conservation Grant Program
- Provide oversight and accountability, monitor habitat conditions, and adapt the program over time

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Across the state, salmon are on the brink of extinction. Some Puget Sound salmon species have declined by 90% compared to historical populations. In the Columbia River basin, returns are as little as 2% of historical levels. To avoid extinction, we need bold action. The Governor is proposing habitat legislation that meets the moment and is a tribute to a longtime champion for salmon, Lorraine Loomis (Swinomish Tribe, and Chair of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission).

The Act requires properly functioning riparian management zones around rivers and streams, including healthy vegetation to maintain cool waters. The Act centers salmon recovery in future land use planning, with important financial assistance, monitoring, and accountability to address the urgency of the salmon crisis.



Properly Functioning Riparian Management Zones

Green corridors around streams and rivers are vital to habitat health, the life within those waters, and communities that depend on salmon. Tree cover loss warms waters to unhealthy temperatures that can be/are lethal for salmon during critical points in their life cycles. Healthy riparian zones provide food for salmon, reduce pollution from stormwater and protect downstream communities from floods, among other benefits

The Lorraine Loomis Act requires properly functioning riparian management zones based on the best available science. Further, the Act requires the state to identify priority watersheds and map riparian management zones. The state must also improve shoreline armoring approaches in marine areas. Local governments must incorporate salmon recovery in their land use planning and specifically address the protection and management of these zones.

Riparian Habitat Conservation Grant Program

Providing financial assistance to landowners is a key tenet of the Act, which creates a new statewide riparian habitat conservation grant program. Importantly, the program provides 70-90% of project costs needed to protect, maintain, and restore riparian management zones. The grants will focus on priority watersheds to maximize benefits for salmon.

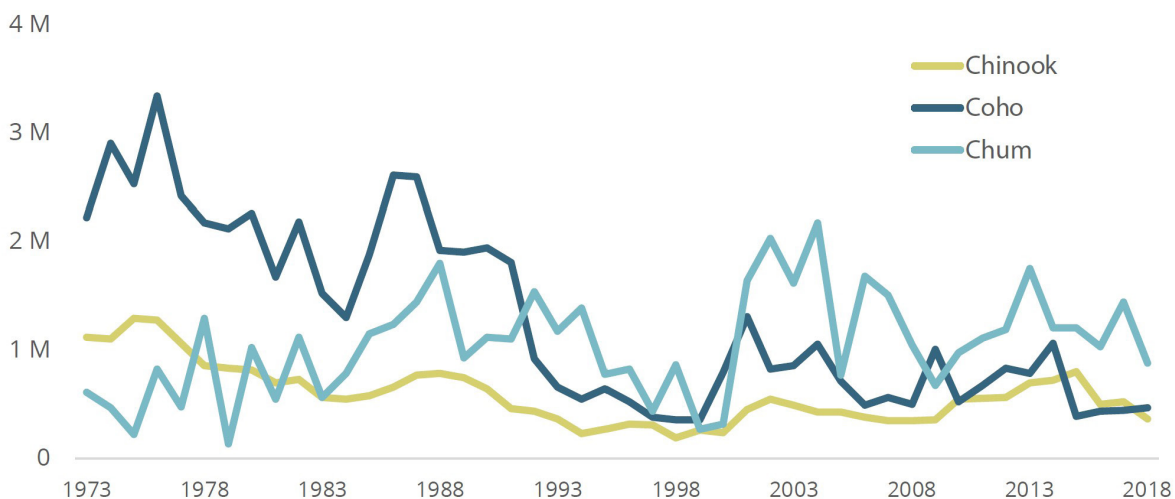
Monitoring, Oversight, and Accountability

Monitoring is critical to long-term success, and this Act requires annual progress coordinated among state agencies in consultation with federally-recognized Tribes, watershed lead entities, and salmon recovery organizations. The Act establishes a State/Tribal Riparian Oversight Committee convened by the Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs to develop specific targets and recommend updates to improve implementation. Biennial reporting on riparian habitat conditions will ensure programs can be adjusted in a timely manner.

Future generations deserve access to salmon.

Salmon have always been a cornerstone of Washington’s ecosystems and culture for many thousands of years. The future of our state’s salmon population stands at a crossroads today. In the words of Lorraine Loomis: “We are working to make certain there will be salmon for the next seven generations.”

Salmon harvest, commercial and recreational catch



SOURCE: Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. Data is for hatchery and wild coho, chum, and Chinook salmon caught (tribal and non-tribal) in the state’s rivers and the ocean as reflected on sport catch record cards and commercial landings. (From the WA Governor’s Policy Brief Dec 2021)