

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



Chefs Urge Congress To Seek Solutions To Restore And Recover Wild Pacific Salmon

Letter Asks Legislators to Protect Declining Columbia and Klamath Fisheries by Restoring Habitat For Wild Salmon

May 8, 2007 – WASHINGTON, D.C. – Nearly 200 chefs from Florida to Alaska have come together to urge members of Congress to seek solutions to restore and recover wild salmon and protect the fisheries that depend upon them in the Pacific salmon states of Washington, Oregon, California, Idaho and Alaska.

Joined by fishermen, fish-buyers and conservationists from across the country, the chefs are in the nation's capitol this week to meet with members of Congress and urge them to support measures, such as the Salmon Economic Analysis and Planning Act (H.R. 1507), that will restore declining Columbia and Klamath fisheries, once among the most abundant in the world.

“Wild salmon are incredibly important to the economic prosperity of the Pacific Northwest, Alaska and our Native American communities,” said Congressman Mike Thompson (D-CA).

“We need to do everything we can to restore and protect our rivers so wild salmon can thrive.”

At a reception tonight in Washington D.C., participating chefs and fishermen will deliver a letter to Congress, spearheaded by chef Alice Waters of Berkeley's famed Chez Panisse restaurant and backed by nearly 200 chefs, restaurant owners and food professionals nationwide, urging legislators to take steps to protect declining west coast fisheries by restoring healthy habitat for wild salmon.

“Wild salmon is one of the few wild foods we still regularly see on the dinner table,” said Waters.

“They have an exquisite, delicate flavor and eating wild salmon can connect you in a beautiful way to the sea. But only a long-term commitment to protecting and restoring salmon habitat will ensure that Pacific wild salmon remains a natural resource.”

Save Our Wild Salmon is a nationwide coalition of businesses, conservation organizations, commercial and sportfishing associations, river groups and taxpayer advocates working collectively to restore healthy and abundant wild salmon to the rivers and streams of the Pacific Northwest. For more information, please visit www.wildsalmon.org.

Fewer wild salmon are returning each year to key western watersheds like the Klamath and the Columbia-Snake river basins. Habitat destruction, poor water management, and dams on the Klamath and lower Snake Rivers have caused wild salmon populations to decline steadily and dramatically over the past several decades.

Last year, locally caught wild salmon was nearly absent from markets and restaurants from southern California through Washington, due to an almost complete closure of the salmon fishing season along 700 miles of coast.

Fishermen and distributors who spent decades building their livelihoods on the availability of this naturally renewable resource were left high and dry, while consumers faced shortages and higher prices wherever local salmon was available. This year's predicted low returns are once again cause for concern, as Washington-based fishermen face a new round of closures and shortages on their coast. Such "rolling blackouts" of salmon hurt both fishing-dependent communities and American consumers.

"Salmon is the lifeblood of coastal communities from California to Alaska, and is one of the most wonderful meals we prepare and share," said Riley Starks, a commercial salmon fisherman and owner of the Willows Inn on Lummi Island, WA. "A year like last year hurts salmon fishermen, fish distributors, and restaurant owners all along the coast."

"If we're going to maintain fishing communities and fish-based economies in our coastal towns, we have to do what it takes to ensure long-term protection and restoration for the rivers, streams, oceans, and sounds where wild salmon live and spawn," Starks continued. "We have to remain conscious of our every impact on these fragile systems."

Full text of the Chefs' Letter to Congress, as well as a list of the chefs, restaurant owners and food professionals who have signed it, can be found online at www.wild.salmon.org.

##

Media Contact:

Therese Wells
Save Our Wild Salmon
therese@wildsalmon.org
ph: 206-286-4455