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To save Northwest salmon, four large obstacles must be removed.

{And they aren't dams.}

There are at least four big obstacles to saving Northwest salmon. But contrary to recent claims, they aren't dams. They're mindsets — ways of thinking that have led the region down false paths and brought about mistakes that have been equally costly for people and salmon.

The Northwest needs a reasonable, balanced and fair salmon solution. To get it, we must overcome the following:

1. The Us vs. Them mentality. Good guys vs. bad guys. Salmon vs. dams. Winners vs. losers. That approach is polarizing. In the salmon issue, the Northwest has a common problem, and it won't be solved through adversarial tactics. We need a win-win solution. Good science can provide one.

2. Working at cross purposes. Salmon recovery is hindered by conflicting policies, practices and laws. For example: Federal law protects migratory birds that are major salmon predators — yet up to 40 percent of some salmon stocks are consumed by birds, according to National Marine Fisheries Service research. There are conflicts between hatchery and wild fish, between protecting endangered salmon and maintaining harvest. These and other conflicting policies must be resolved.

3. The search for a silver bullet. Salmon have an incredibly complex life cycle. They're affected in myriad ways by ocean temperatures and conditions, food supplies, harvesting policies, hatchery management and a host of river conditions. Anyone who promotes a single, "silver bullet" solution like dam breaching isn't dealing in science.

4. The elevation of politics over science. For too long, politics has overshadowed science in guiding salmon recovery efforts. For example, some of the most recent scientific studies show increased survival under current river conditions — and yet we still hear calls for extreme, radical measures such as tearing down the four lower Snake River dams.

The Northwest can save the salmon while maintaining a healthy environment and a strong economy. We can do so by supporting a reasonable, balanced, fair approach grounded in sound science. Ultimately, that will benefit everyone, including the salmon.

For more information or a white paper on a balanced, scientific approach to salmon recovery, e-mail PNWAMAIL@aol.com and ask for "Saving Salmon in the Pacific Northwest."

This ad is supported by the following organizations whose members work and live on the Columbia and Snake rivers:

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