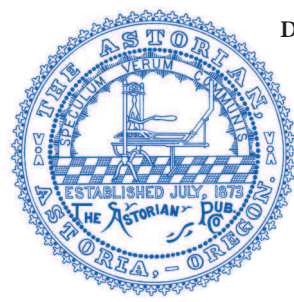


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OUR VIEW

Bad salmon run hints at trouble ahead

Count backward three years and we come to 2014 — precursor to this spring's extremely poor salmon returns.

Fewer than 45,000 adult spring Chinook and about 5,300 immature jacks have been counted at Bonneville Dam, compared to 10-year averages of about 135,000 and 21,000. Shad, another species that should begin surging toward inland spawning grounds about now, reached a count of 38 at Bonneville this week, compared to the 10-year average of more than 33,000.

In the case of Chinook, actual returns may not be quite so bleak as the dam count indicates. Heavy mountain runoff has made the Columbia's water cloudy and cold. Test fisheries found quite a few Chinook loitering here in the estuary, delaying their swim upstream. But with the start of summer only a month away, there isn't much time left for the spring run to come through. If they don't make it to spawning grounds, the run three years from now also will be weak.

This three-year cycle of migration and return is one of the Pacific Northwest's great natural phenomena, one that has sustained humans, wildlife and forests since time immemorial. But today's fast pace and many distractions mean most of us aren't closely attuned to this rhythm. We need to go back and look at the news three years ago to understand what's happening today.

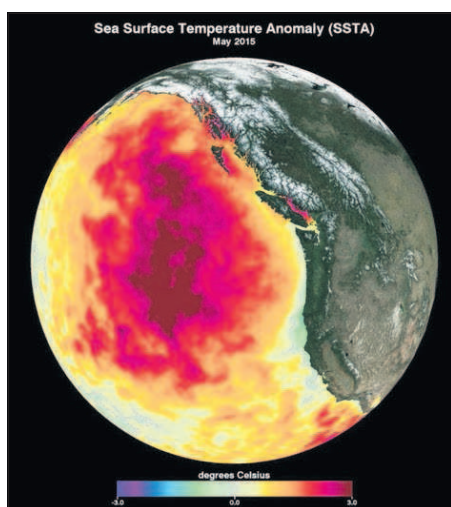
The big news was "The Blob," a peculiar concentration of warm ocean water off Oregon, Washington state and Vancouver Island. Born in late-2013, it was gathering strength in 2014 and lasted until 2015. In September 2016, meteorologists said it was returning, though there has been little indication of it since then — this past winter was notoriously cool and wet, conditions opposite to those delivered by the Blob.

Warmth and lack of normal precipitation during the Blob years created lots of pleasant picnic weather but began worrying salmon observers. Some local hatcheries struggled to have enough in-stream flow for adult fish to be able to return. River water temperatures approached and sometimes exceeded safe levels for salmon. Meanwhile, out in the ocean where it remains difficult to monitor exactly how well salmon are doing, the warm water meant that young salmon weren't finding the nutritious cold-water prey they rely on. Ultimately, the best test of ocean conditions is waiting three years to see how many salmon survived to adulthood in order to return to spawning beds. Clearly, the news is not good.

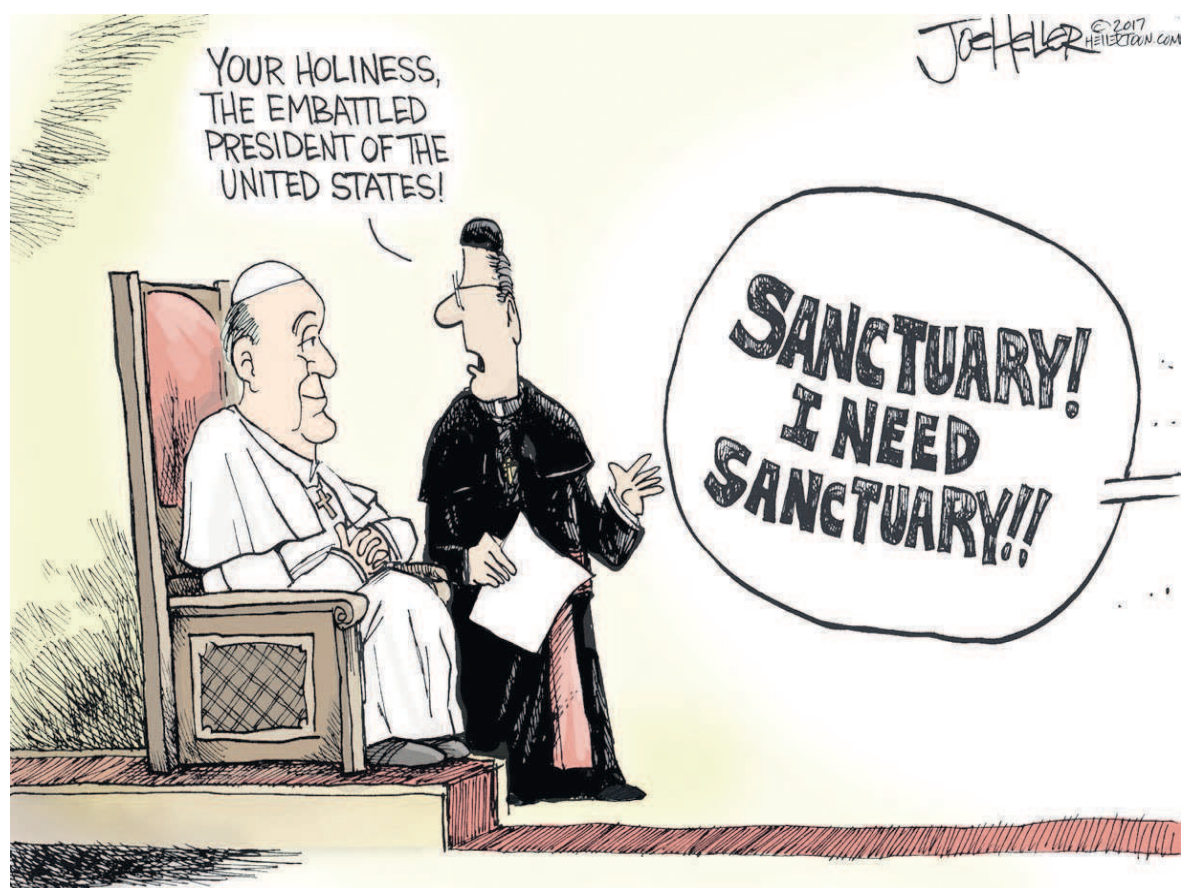
Nick Bond, Washington state's climatologist, said at a Long Beach conference a year ago that more blobs and overall climate warming are inevitable. Our region is heading toward a "really sobering" time when many interior rivers will be too hot for today's native fish. "It'll be a totally different place, and it won't be a good place for salmon. It'll be a place for more southern species, at least in the ocean, to be able to handle that," he said.

It's worth remembering that there sometimes were bad salmon returns long before modern industrialization and white settlement on this coast, according to native accounts. However, there's no discounting the fact we face a time of epic change. This argues for several responses:

- We must continue supporting hatcheries; without them, this year's returns would be truly abysmal, to the detriment of all sorts of fishermen, and other species that depend on salmon.
- We must continue managing the factors over which we can exert some control, such as habitat conditions inside the estuary, water temperatures and flows within the hydroelectric system, and unusually high levels of predation by marine mammals and birds.
- We must invest in high-quality monitoring and research to understand what's happening in the ocean in real time. Waiting until salmon fail to show up before amending fishing seasons is becoming increasingly unacceptable.
- We must make both local and national plans to mitigate economic and environmental damage from rapidly changing fisheries. As southern species take up residence here, we should prepare for both negative and, potentially, positive impacts.



American Geophysical Union
Unusually high sea-surface temperatures in the Pacific in May 2015, compared to the 2002-2012 average. These conditions are starting to come back to haunt us this spring, in the form of dramatically poor salmon returns.



AP Photo/Alex Brandon

Air Force One with President Donald Trump aboard taxis for takeoff at Andrews Air Force Base, Md., Friday.

The Trump administration's power vacuum on display

By DAVID BROOKS

New York Times News Service

After an eruption, volcanoes sometimes collapse at the center. The magma chamber empties out and the volcano falls in on itself, leaving a caldera and a fractured ring of stone around the void, covered by deadening ash.

That's about the shape of Washington after the last stunning fortnight. The White House at the center just collapsed in on itself and the nation's policy apparatus is covered in ash.

I don't say that because I think the Comey-Russia scandal will necessarily lead to impeachment. I have no idea where the investigations will go.

I say it because White Houses, like all organizations, run on talent, and the Trump White House has just become a Human Resources disaster area.

We have seen White Houses engulfed by scandal before. But we have never seen a White House implode before it had the time to staff up. The Nixon, Reagan and Clinton White Houses had hired quality teams by the time their scandals came. They could continue to function, sort of, even when engulfed.

The Trump administration, on the other hand, has hundreds of senior and midlevel positions to fill, and few people of quality or experience are going to want to take them.

Few people of any quality or experience are going to want to join a team that is toxic. Nobody is going to want to become the next H.R. McMaster, a formerly respected figure who is now permanently tainted because he threw his lot in with Donald Trump. Nobody is going to want to join a self-cannibalizing piranha squad whose main activity is lawyering up.

That means even if the Trump presidency survives, it will be staffed by the sort of C- and D-List flora and fauna who will make more mistakes, commit more scandals and lead to more dysfunction.

Running a White House is insanely hard. It requires a few

thousand extremely smart and savvy people who are willing to work crazy hours and strain their family lives because they fundamentally believe in the mission and because they truly admire the president.

Even on its best early days, the Trump White House never had that.

Trump was able to recruit some talented people, mostly on the foreign policy side, but organizational cultures are set from the top, and a culture of selfishness has always marked this administration.

Even if the Trump presidency survives, it will be staffed by the sort of C- and D-List flora and fauna who will make more mistakes, commit more scandals and lead to more dysfunction.

Even before Inauguration Day, the level of leaking out of this White House was unprecedented, as officials sought to curry favor with the press corps and as factions vied with one another.

But over the past 10 days the atmosphere has become extraordinary. Senior members of the White House staff have trained their sights on the man they serve. Every day now there are stories in *The Washington Post* and elsewhere in which unnamed White House officials express disdain, exasperation, anger and disrespect for their boss.

As the British say, the staff is jumping ship so fast they are leav-

ing the rats gaping and applauding.

Trump, for his part, is resentfully returning fire, blaming his underlings for his own mistakes, complaining that McMaster is a pain, speculating about firing and demoting people. This is a White House in which the internal nickname for the chief of staff is Rancid.

The organizational culture is about to get worse. People who have served in administrations under investigation speak eloquently about how miserable it is. You never know which of your friends is about to rat you out. No personal communication is really secure. You never know which of your colleagues is going to break ranks and write the tell-all memoir, and you think that maybe it should be you.

Even people not involved in the original scandal can find themselves caught up in the maelstrom and see their careers ruined. Legal costs soar. The investigations can veer off in wildly unexpected directions, so no White House nook or cranny is safe.

As current staff leaves or gets pushed out, look for Trump to try to fill the jobs with business colleagues who also have no experience in government. It's striking that the only person who this week seems excited to take a Trump administration job is Milwaukee Sheriff David Clarke, who made his name as a TV performance artist calling the Black Lives Matter movement "black slime," and who now claims he has been hired to serve in the Department of Homeland Security.

Congressional Republicans seem to think they can carry on and legislate despite the scandal, but since 1933 we have no record of significant legislation without strong presidential leadership. Members of this Congress are not going to be judged by where they set the corporate tax rate. They will be defined by where they stood on Donald Trump's threat to civic integrity. That issue is bound to overshadow all else.

The implosion at the center is going to affect everything around it. The Trump administration may survive politically, but any hopes that it will become an effective governing organization are dashed.