

OPINION



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GUEST COLUMN

The measuring stick of our survival

My mentor Billy Frank Jr. always said salmon are the measuring stick of our survival.

He was referring to all of us.

Salmon are the keystone that supports dozens of other species of fish and wildlife. Their survival, and ours, depends on clean, cool, flowing rivers and streams.



ED JOHNSTONE

We had an opportunity to protect those waters with the Lorraine Loomis Act, proposed by Gov. Jay Inslee and named for the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission's former chairwoman, who passed away last

year. Lorraine knew protecting riparian habitat is essential to salmon recovery. She wanted nothing more than to ensure future generations of Washingtonians could experience what it means to have healthy salmon runs and the joy of salmon fishing.

We understand that the bill did not progress in the state Legislature this year, but that doesn't mean the work stops. It can't.

We're already behind schedule. It's been 10 years since Billy said, "We are at a crossroads and we're running out of time."

The Lorraine Loomis Act was a starting point that sought to protect and grow trees in the riparian zones along salmon and steelhead streams. It also would have provided financial assistance to help landowners comply with the law. It would have included a regulatory backstop for those unwilling to comply.

Tribes have been pushing for legislation like this for years. But this isn't an "Indian bill." Numerous environmental



Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Western Washington's treaty tribes regard protecting riparian areas, like the one pictured, as key to restoring salmon populations.

groups, as well as recreational and commercial fishing organizations, have supported it because they understand we're all in this together. They have prioritized salmon restoration because they know how critical the situation is.

Tribes are bearing the burden of fixing a problem we didn't create.

Our hatcheries release more than 35 million salmon and steelhead every year and we have restored thousands of miles of habitat. But habitat destruction has run rampant, and the state has failed to do enough about it. Our people are hungry and there's no end in sight.

Climate change is a primary culprit. Temperatures in streams are the highest on record. After last summer's extreme heat wave, more than 2,500 Chinook salmon died on the South Fork Nooksack River before they could reach the Lummi Nation's Skookum Creek hatchery, because of lethal temperatures for salmon and low flows. Improved riparian conditions and channel complexity could have prevented this tragedy.

If the Lorraine Loomis Act passed this year, it would have helped prevent more such tragedies in the years to come. As it is, the number of tempera-

ture-impaired salmon stream segments in our United States v. Washington case area has increased from 400 to 2,000 over the past few decades.

Getting trees in the ground is the first step toward protecting riparian habitat. It's a small step, but an important one that requires a long-term commitment. The treaty tribes are committed to this work. It's going to take at least 40 years before trees grow enough to protect our salmon streams. Additional habitat restoration is needed, and we need to build capacity and infrastructure to do the work — now.

Yes, there are those who oppose these critical efforts. Some in the agricultural industry seem to think creating riparian management zones puts the burden of salmon recovery on them. They claim it could harm their businesses. It's a short-sighted attitude given the fact that protecting streams, rivers and the environment is an investment in their future as well as ours. Also, failing to protect salmon habitat violates treaty tribes' federally protected right to harvest salmon.

We've already lost more than 90% of our salmon harvest. We aren't asking farmers to give up 90% of their livelihood. Planting trees won't put anyone out of business. It won't impede the economy, the environment or the Northwest way of life. Quite the opposite.

Fully functioning riparian habitats provide bank stability, shade, pollution control and the large woody debris salmon need to survive. The lack of these habitats eats away evermore at our precious way of life.

There is no more time to waste. The state needs to get serious about reestablishing riparian habitats — now.

Ed Johnstone is the chairman of the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Divide and conquer

Divide and conquer. I'm not talking about the Russian conflict, but the battle we have in our own front yard over Heritage Square development. We all are looking for the same result and goals, but have gotten off track.

As a community, we need to offer affordable housing. As a community, we need to work together to control the homelessness issues. And Astorians want Heritage Square to be our downtown gathering spot, with parking and open space.

Don't combine complicated issues ... keep them separate. That will be the road to success.

JEFF DALY
Astoria

A good look

The writer of "Astoria police to adjust patrols after vandalism downtown" (The Astorian, March 8) gave us a good look at what the local law enforcement is doing.

I was driving downtown yesterday and thought to myself, "Man, are there a lot of patrol vehicles driving around today?"

I never would have thought kids these days were climbing on top of food trucks and houses. I read this article today and understood completely. Keep doing great work. God bless America.

CORBIN ALGIERI
Astoria

Inspire

Iwould recommend that everyone read Jonathan Williams' well-written article on the opinion page, "Inspiring each other" (The Astorian, March 5). He says as we grieve our losses, "we must find a path forward. One way is to inspire each other."

His article is so true. As we end this pandemic, let's put our differences aside (masks or no masks — shots or no shots). We need to become united, and get this country on the way forward. Get out there. See your friends. Make a difference! Inspire each other, shout hallelujah for our recovery.

He mentions Skip Hauke. I join in memory of this good Astorian!

Another issue: The idea of a housing project is good. The location at Heritage Square is bad! I have heard too many negative complaints from the people of Astoria.

My concern is also parking. Even if the city states that new parking is not necessary, that many units will have an impact on our parking somewhat. I understand they will have a staff. It's obvious workers will have cars.

We are 86 and 87. It is certain we do

not walk well. We would like to visit downtown on occasion, and if parking is a problem, we will be reluctant to do this. Astoria is also a tourist town. That needs to be considered, also.

We have no legal Astoria city vote, as we are five minutes out of the city limits, but I encourage those in opposition.

Welcome back to the world folks. Inspire!

DeLORES MAY RICHARDS
Astoria

Sad state

What a sad state of affairs for the city of Astoria and the proposed development of Heritage Square.

Of course affordable housing is needed, and is certainly recognized by a majority of residents. However, utilizing the Heritage Square area should not be on the list of proposed locations!

Using a housing project modeled after a similar campus in Portland (The Astorian,

March 5) makes no sense whatsoever. Well folks, this isn't Portland. Astoria is a small, scenic city with a rich history that should be celebrated.

Heritage Square should be the crown jewel for not only the residents, but tourists alike. Something just doesn't seem right with this disturbing redevelopment proposal. Who stands to profit?

PATRICIA COWGILL
Warrenton



KUPER

"I am going to kinda miss the way it hides my double chin."