

The INDEPENDENT

Serving the upper Nehalem River valley. Published twice monthly on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month, by Public Opinion Laboratory Ltd., 1206 State Avenue, Vernonia, OR 97064, as a free newspaper. Editors and Publishers, Dirk & Noni Andersen, (503) 429-9410.

Opinion

Beware the sound bites of politicians

The silly season is just about upon us again. No, not tax time, nothing so simple. Election time!

Some candidates, declared or otherwise, are trying out sound bites to judge how their "extemporaneous" comments will go over.

Most sound bites already in use are deliberately used to muddy issues while damaging people's ability to clarify the issues.

A case in point deals with "entitlement." The word is pretty simple and means only a legal claim. In that sense, Social Security payments are an entitlement because workers live up to the requirements of a law passed in the 1930s and pay into that fund. But those who are twisting the meaning of Social Security lump it in with farm subsidies, veterans benefits, welfare payments and Medicare. Then they make loud noises about how the elderly are bankrupting the nation.

Actually, there would be a huge surplus in the Social Security trust fund if it wasn't continually being siphoned off to hide the enormity of the deficit accumulated during the last 13 years. This isn't a partisan complaint; both Republicans and Democrats are actively involved in deficit spending.

For that matter, "deficit spending" is another sound bite. It really means spending money you don't have, buying everything on credit, then spending every raise you get just to pay the interest on the debts. In the case of the U.S. government, it also means stealing your kids' college money. But if it's dressed up in a fancy label it doesn't sound so bad.

Some of the words used in the failed effort to keep drugs out of the U.S. are also sound bites. How about "interdiction"? It means prohibition, but it sounds like a lot more. So when you hear a politician talk about interdicting drugs, it only means to prohibit them. It doesn't have anything to do with training armies and police departments in South America. It doesn't have anything to do with the CIA importing a ton of cocaine so they can catch buyers (Everyone involved in that operation should be prosecuted, but they won't even be fired.).

Presently we're hearing something a bit more astounding than the usual sound bites. It deals with the practice of barging Idaho salmon downriver in an attempt to save them from extinction. Sure, the National Marine Fisheries board is aware that 90 percent of the salmon die in the process, but they still approve the procedure as a way to "save" the salmon. If they keep saying it over and over, a lot of people will believe it, too.

Before the silly season is in full sway, it would be wise to limber up your fingers. You're going to have to spend a lot of time with a dictionary if you want to know what they're really saying.



Ike Says

By Dale Webb, member
Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League

Coho have returned to Bear Creek. For those of you who don't know where Bear Creek is, it is the creek that flows on the north side of Anderson Park up through town and crosses under Hwy. 47 at the blinking yellow light by the Wilcox & Flegel bulk plant. The creek continues on through Miller's log pond and out the draw into timber land.

Bear Creek is a prime example of the obstacles man has created for Coho salmon as they try to return to their spawning grounds. The stream has many culverts, some that stretch for hundreds of feet. The remnants of Miller's Pond must still be a major obstacle due to the length and width of the clay chute that is the spillway of the pond. Yet the Coho persevere and complete their journey to the very headwaters of this stream.

This year, nine Coho were observed in Bear Creek, most of them about a mile above town. Five of the fish were females so there is a possibility that 10,000 fry could emerge from the gravel this spring.

Some people might wonder why seeing nine fish in Bear Creek is a big deal, but Coho salmon are in such trouble up and down the Pacific coast that they are under consideration for a Threatened or Endangered listing under the Endangered Species Act. These nine fish, in a creek that was all but given up for dead, are very encouraging. The exciting news is that these fish are most likely hatchbox fish that were raised by our local chapter and released by school children in Bear Creek in 1991.

In talking to locals who have observed Bear Creek for decades, it is interesting to note that Coho were very numerous earlier on. Of course Coho were numerous everywhere back then. One statement by many observers was that once the dam for Miller's Pond was put in, fish runs began to diminish. The lower stretch of Bear Creek is not compatible to spawning due to lack of rock and the hostile urban environment. Water flows in the summer time are also a major influence in the survival of juvenile fish.

The Bear Creek fish are also significant because there were no fish seen in a two mile survey of upper Crooked Creek, nine fish in a Pebble Creek survey and ten fish in a 3.1 mile

survey of Kenusky Creek. All of these streams have far fewer obstacles and much better stream flows than Bear Creek.

Now that these fish have spawned, it doesn't mean that their troubles are over. The fry will emerge from the gravel this spring and will most likely travel down stream into deeper holes, some of which will be in downtown Vernonia. The hazards in town will be from street run-off pollution, herbicide and insecticide sprays, thermal pollution and lack of habitat such as adequate cover.

So what can we, as local citizens, do to help these fish survive and come back in 1996, three times greater in numbers? The best response is to remember that they are there in the stream and take care not to spill toxic materials into the stream; don't dump your grass clippings in the creek and don't clean out any woody debris that may have collected instream. This material is used as cover by the young salmon. Sections of stream that are "beautified" by removing all the brush and planting grass right up to the water, are a sterile environment for the fish. I noticed that below some of the culverts in town there are deep pockets of water that will most certainly contain young Coho this summer and next winter since they will not smolt until the spring of 1995. A Christmas tree or two anchored in these holes would go a long way in providing much-needed shelter for the fish, both this summer and next winter.

It is also important that the fish passage for both adults and juveniles not be impeded. The fish that came in this year had excellent water conditions to get by such obstacles, but we don't have good conditions every year and if the salmon runs can't reach good spawning areas, the run declines. Juvenile fish also have to be able to move up and down a stream, this is most critical during the summer heat as they try to find the coolest holes in the stream.

If anyone is interested in providing habitat for the local Bear Creek salmon and needs some help, feel free to call me or any of my fellow Ikes; we will be glad to help. I will also be surveying the juvenile fish this year and will be needing access to some of the deep holes this summer so don't be surprised when a guy with hip waders and a net shows up on your door step and says he wants to catch some salmon in your back yard.