



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Patagonia's "Artifishal" Get's It Wrong**

What does a southern California based clothing manufacturer know about Northwest salmon and resident killer whales? Apparently, not much.

Recently, Patagonia, outdoor clothing and gear manufacturer with corporate offices in Ventura, California, released "Artifishal" a well-intentioned, but misguided and misleading film focused on declining wild salmon. It is littered with over-amplified select science and what appear to be deliberate misrepresentations regarding fish hatcheries and the role they play in wild salmon and Orca recovery.

The 80-minute long movie asserts hatcheries are the primary cause of the decline of wild fish concluding, "Hatcheries and fish farms are driving our wild fish to extinction." A claim they fail to substantiate and is largely false. Fish farms have been shown to be a threat to wild fish and the Washington legislature has passed laws that require their elimination. Hatcheries, however, are a much different story.

In fact, absent decades of hatchery supplementation many Northwest salmon runs would have been lost forever long ago. Approximately 2/3 of the hatcheries in Oregon were constructed to mitigate for lost natural fish production. Hatcheries didn't cause the decline of natural production, instead in many cases they have ensured the ongoing existence of anadromous fish runs.

Producers of the film suggest that eliminating hatchery salmon releases would result in a sudden increase in wild fish abundance like occurred on Montana's Madison River trout population in the 1970s. Little could be further from the truth. There is no correlation between eliminating the release of catchable sized rainbow trout to increase numbers of non-native brown trout and recovering wild salmon. In fact, there is no known example in Oregon or Washington where the removal of salmon hatchery supplementation from a watershed with a historical population, resulted in an increase in abundance or productivity of wild fish at the population level absent other contributing factors.

(H&WC Release continued)

Conversely, there are numerous examples where well-designed and properly implemented hatchery programs have resulted in increases in wild fish numbers, helped recover runs that were nearing extirpation and even restored extirpated runs. Admittedly not all hatchery programs benefit wild fish, but hatchery managers have learned a lot in the past century. Modifications can, and should, be made to correct hatchery deficiencies making production more efficient and released fish more fit for survival in the natural environment with negligible impact on their naturally spawned cousins.

Improved hatchery production would also benefit starving Southern Resident Killer Whales. Again, Artifishal's producers get it wrong. They incorrectly blame hatcheries for the Orca's plight, while the truth is hatcheries are a big part of the solution. Orca authorities point to a lack of prey, which may be linked to a decrease in hatchery production, as a big part of the problem. Experts tasked with identifying measures to improve the health of our Orcas recommend increasing hatchery Chinook salmon production to help reduce the decline of these magnificent mammals.

Like the Orcas, many runs of wild salmon are in trouble and most point to the loss of habitat as the number one contributor to their decline. Efforts must continue to eliminate further habitat degradation and restore quality habitat where possible. Sensible people, however, understand it's not realistic to believe all lost salmon habitat will be recovered, and absent maximum habitat recovery it's not reasonable to expect wild fish numbers will recuperate to the point of abundance.

And, loss of habitat isn't the only challenge faced by our iconic wild salmon. Out of control predation on out-migrating juveniles and returning adults, poor water quality and quantity, overharvest and deteriorating ocean conditions also threaten our wild salmon. Recovering wild fish to sustainable and abundant levels will require addressing all factors leading to their decline.

Instead of falsely blaming hatcheries for the drop in wild salmon and Orca populations, Patagonia could be using its influence and resources to point the spotlight on the real problems putting their futures in jeopardy. And, instead of criticizing hatcheries they could be advocating for improved hatchery practices and increased production to feed starving Orcas and rebound suffering fisheries. Providing misleading information regarding hatcheries and the real plight of wild salmon and Orcas is a disservice to a concerned public, sets false expectations, sidesteps addressing the real problems and most importantly does little to help our endangered salmon and resident killer whales.

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***Hatchery & Wild Coexist*** is a campaign highlighting the importance of hatcheries and the role they play in wild fish recovery and providing abundant fisheries. More information is available at: ***[www.hatchery-wild-coexist.com](http://www.hatchery-wild-coexist.com)***