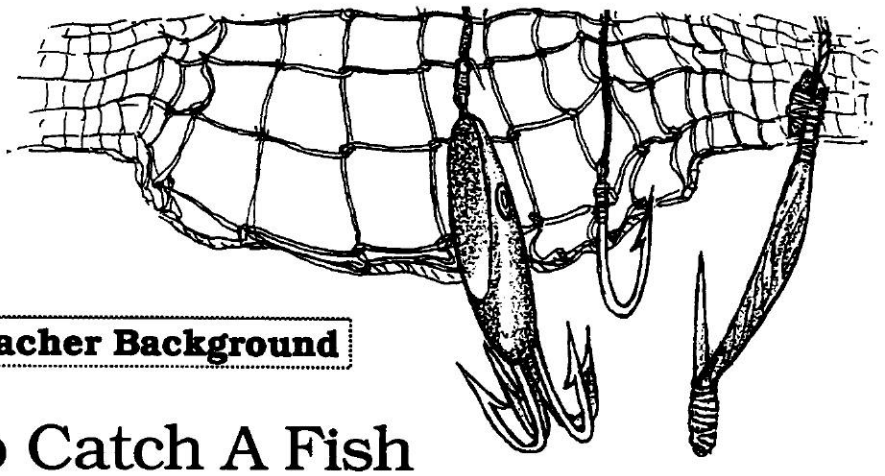


Teacher Background

To Catch A Fish

Salmon is an extremely valuable commodity. This has been well understood for over a century. Commercial fishing for salmon began around 1877. By 1915, due in part to over-fishing and in part to habitat destruction, Puget Sound runs were declining rapidly. In 1921 the Washington Department of Fisheries was created to manage salmon runs and regulate how the resource would be allocated among interested groups. TO CATCH A FISH and the following activity, FISHGAME deal with how salmon fishing is managed to protect the viability of fish runs. The allocation issue is taken up in the subsequent lesson, "WHO GETS TO FISH?"

Regulating the fishing catch in Washington involves knowledge and control of a wide set of variables. These variables include numbers of fish of different species returning to many different rivers, anticipated natural mortality, and the predicted catch by each of the groups of people fishing. Management involves making careful estimates of the populations of returning fish. It involves a system for controlling how many fish are caught, and it also involves a method of finding out how many fish have already been taken during the fishing season, so that further limitations can be imposed if necessary.

For up-to-date information on what regulations are in effect on both commercial and sports salmon fishing, the Fisheries Hotline is a good resource: 1-976-3200.

The student page, TO CATCH A FISH is designed to provide a context for the salmon management game, FISHGAME. Hopefully it will also help students connect the importance of salmon management with any personal experiences they have had with salmon fishing. You may use it either as a classroom assignment or as homework before playing FISHGAME.

Lesson Plan

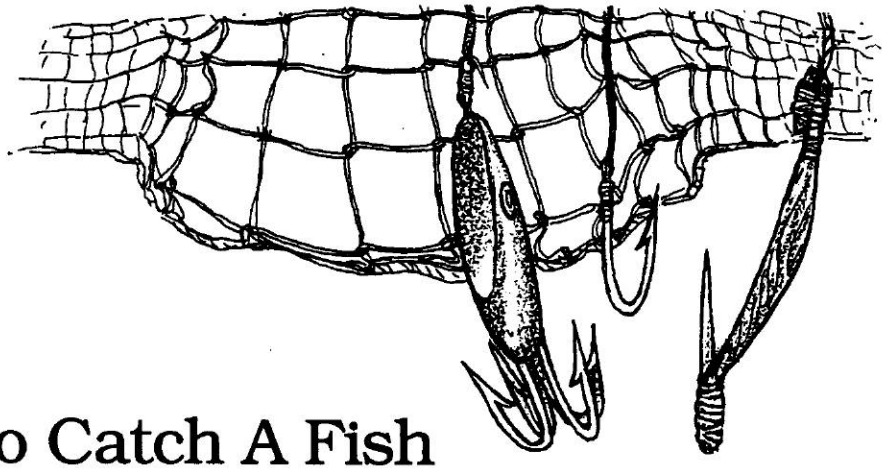
Answer Key

1. Not enough salmon would return to spawn. The runs would decline.

2. People sportsfishing are required to carry a salmon license or "punch card". Whenever a salmon is caught it is recorded immediately on the card. Cards must be mailed in to Fisheries when full or at the end of the season

3. It limits the places open for fishing and the days when one can fish.

4. Students can get this information from the Washington Department of Fisheries regulations pamphlet, from the Fisheries Hotline, or possibly from local sports fishing supply stores.



To Catch A Fish

As Hyak moves eastward toward Puget Sound, there are a many people who would very much like to catch her. Hyak is already a fortunate chinook. Even before entering the Strait she escaped being caught by the offshore fishing fleet. Not all of her companions were so lucky! The offshore fleet has the first chance to catch fish entering the Sound. Most of these boats are modern, efficient trollers. These boats catch between 30 and 70% of the fish even before they enter the Sound.

Once inside, there are other kinds of commercial boats, there is tribal fishing, and there is sports fishing.

1. What would happen to salmon if there was no regulation of fishing in Puget Sound?

In Washington, the Department of Fisheries is charged with protecting salmon. Each year it must make careful estimates of how many fish are returning.

While the fishing season is underway, it must also find out how many fish are being caught by commercial boats, Indians, and sportsfishing. Each of these groups has a way of reporting how many fish have been caught.

2. How does a sports fisherman let the Department of Fisheries know how many salmon he/she has caught? (If you don't know, find out! Ask a friend who fishes, or call a sportsfishing supply store.)

Once it knows how many fish are being caught, it still must keep each of the groups fishing from catching too many fish.

You may wonder how the Department of Fisheries manages to do this!

In Washington it is done by regulating the places you can fish and the days open for fishing. For example, if you were a commercial fisherman, you would need to find out exactly where you could fish, and on what days. You could get this information by calling the Fisheries hotline, *1-976-3200* which gives you a recorded message. Sports fishermen also use this hotline to find out where and when they may fish. (It is a long distance number for most areas, but you might like to try it anyway!)

3. How does the Washington Department of Fisheries limit the number of fish caught?

4. What regulations on sports fishing exist in your area now? Are there days when you can't fish? What limits are there on how many fish you can keep and what size they must be? (Who could you ask to find out this information?)