

Beyond pro-vs-anti hatchery: Understanding fishing community perceptions of salmonid hatcheries in Oregon



Image: USFWS

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If you had to **categorize fishers into distinct groups** based on their views of salmonid hatcheries, which groups would you use?

Agenda



METHODS



BELIEF-BASED
SEGMENTS



COMMUNICATION
IMPLICATIONS

We asked two questions:

1. How do non-tribal fishing community members view hatcheries?
2. Can we identify meaningful subgroups based on shared beliefs?

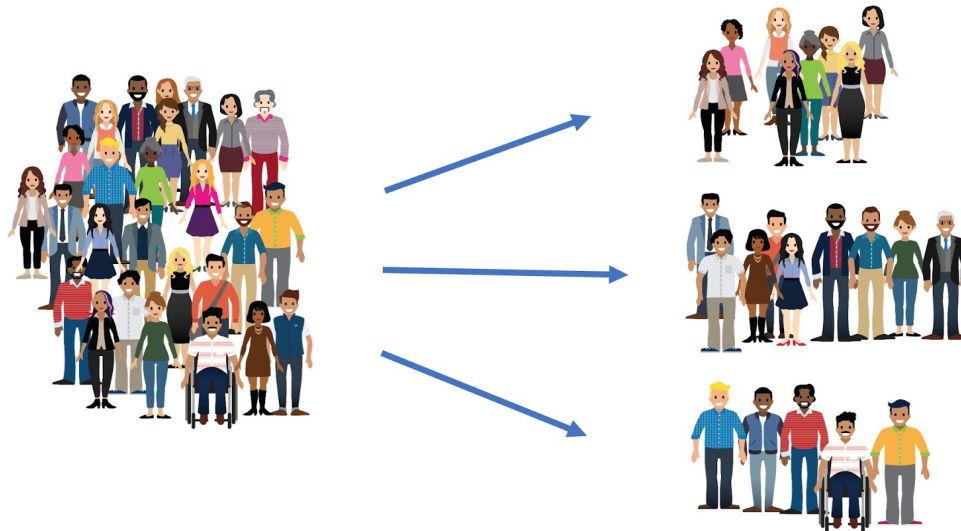


Image: salesforce.com

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18 Interviews

Purposive & snowball sample

Codebook refined with AI summaries



Identifying "segments"

Like a field guide to people's perceptions

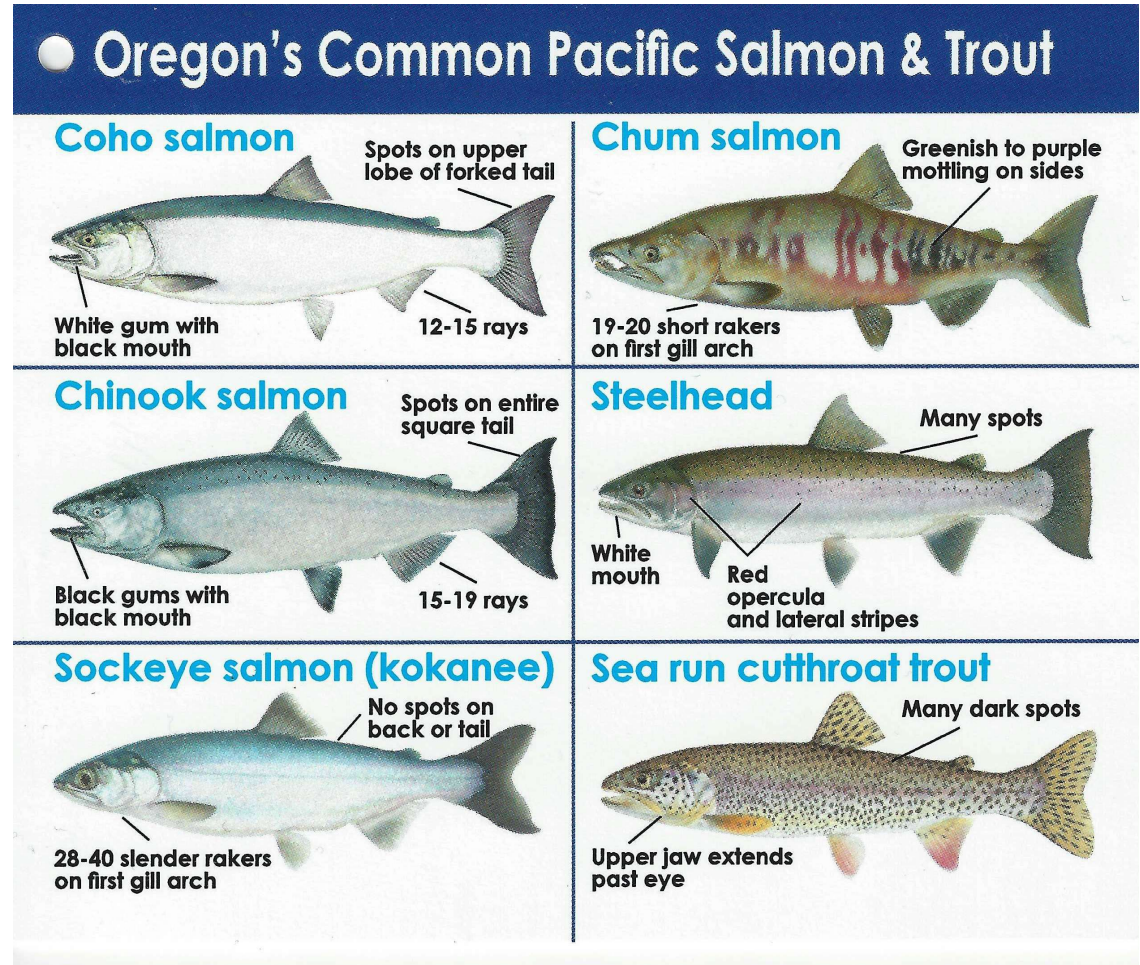


Image: Pinterest

Our findings

People's views
fell into five
categories

Social impacts

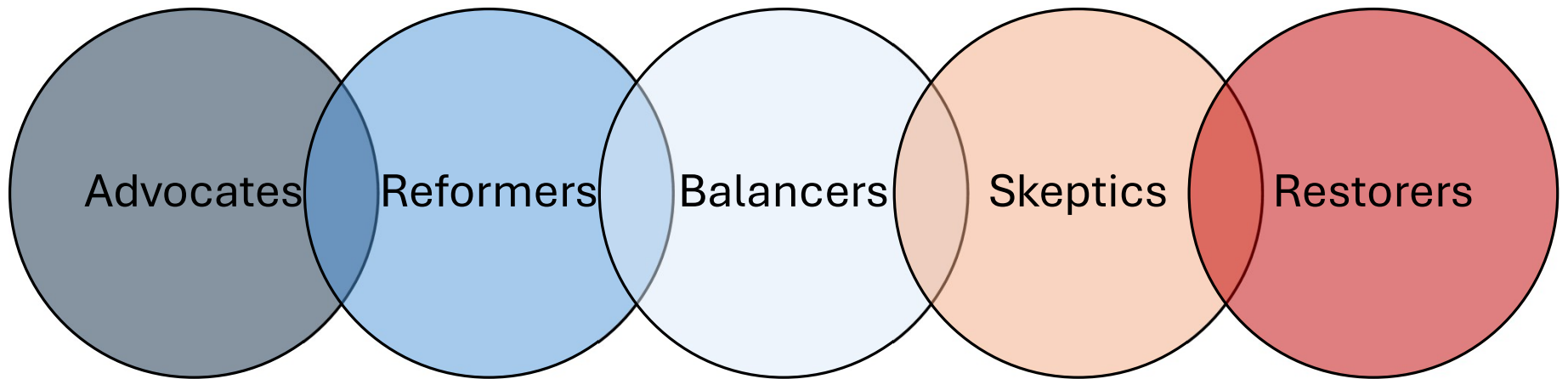
Ecological impacts

Governance legitimacy

Management acceptability

Myths others hold

We identified five belief-based segments



Advocates see hatcheries as essential

- See social & ecological benefits
- Believe more production is better

"I don't see any drawbacks to salmon and steelhead hatcheries in Oregon. I only see benefits."

– I14a

Reformers want to improve hatcheries

- See social & ecological benefits
- Believe modern techniques reduce harm
- Want reform, not removal

“Without hatcheries, we don't have fisheries [...] Healthy salmon and steelhead fisheries mean jobs [...] Because of hatcheries we can keep people working.”

– I10

Reformers want to improve hatcheries

- See social & ecological benefits
- Believe modern techniques reduce harm
- Want reform, not removal

“I'm very pro-hatchery when done right.”

– I10

Balancers want conservation & harvest

- See social benefits and varied ecological impacts
- Believe hatcheries are useful but need careful management
- Want context-specific solutions

"I want to maximize the benefits of operating a fish hatchery while minimizing the negative impacts on the naturally produced populations of salmonids."

– 107

Balancers want conservation & harvest

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“I am a wild fish advocate. I would love for there to be no need for fish hatcheries... but I am keen to the fact that if I want the ability to go harvest a fish or to take my kids out fishing... we're going to be increasingly reliant on hatcher[ies].”

– 107

Skeptics believe hatcheries harm wild fish

- See questionable social benefits
- See clear scientific evidence of harm to wild fish
- Want to phase out hatcheries, shift to habitat restoration

“We went through this era [of] technical fixes to see if that would help produce fish that were less impactful in the wild [...] I don't think we've been successful at minimizing them to the degree that they don't still carry [...] substantial risks.”

Restorers see primarily negative impacts

Believe hatcheries...

- fund agency budgets
- are incompatible with wild fish recovery
- reflect a flawed, human-centered approach to nature

“Artificial propagation is a real issue with me. The entire infrastructure of the thing is built on us just playing God with these fish.”

– 106

Restorers reject hatcheries entirely

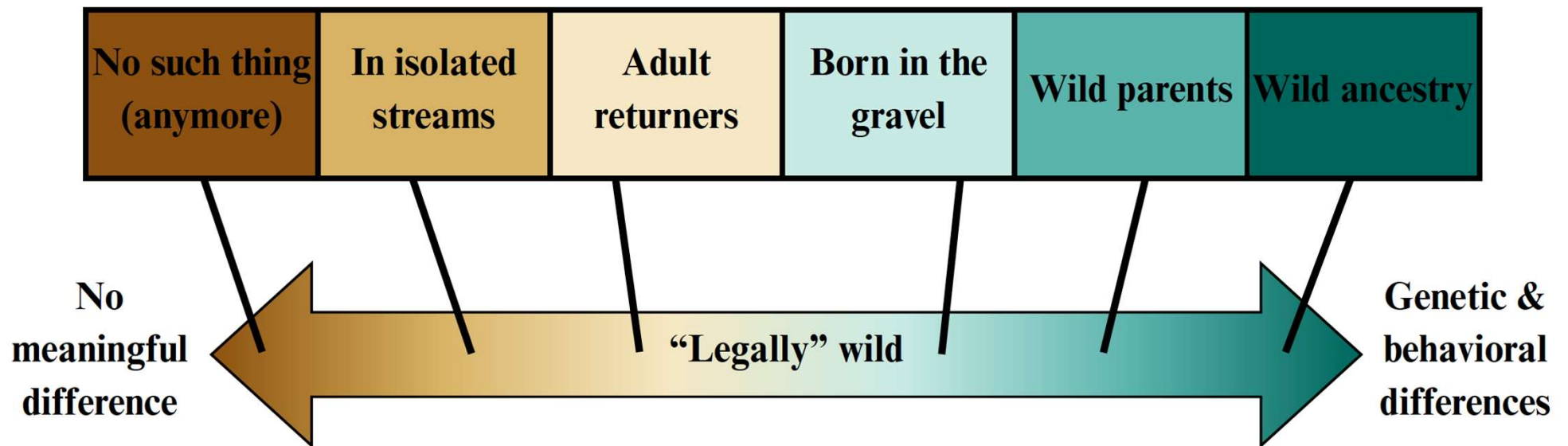
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“The agencies aren't telling the public the truth about what's going on. The scientific literature is full of information about what's going wrong. [The] agencies aren't confiding with the public about the problem that needs to be fixed.”

And one bonus finding...

What is a “wild” salmon?



Key takeaways

Similarity to Manfredro et al.'s value orientations

Advocates & Reformers <i>Traditionalists</i>	Balancers <i>Pluralists</i>
Disengaged advocates? Disengaged reformers? <i>Distanced</i>	Skeptics & Reformers <i>Mutualists</i>

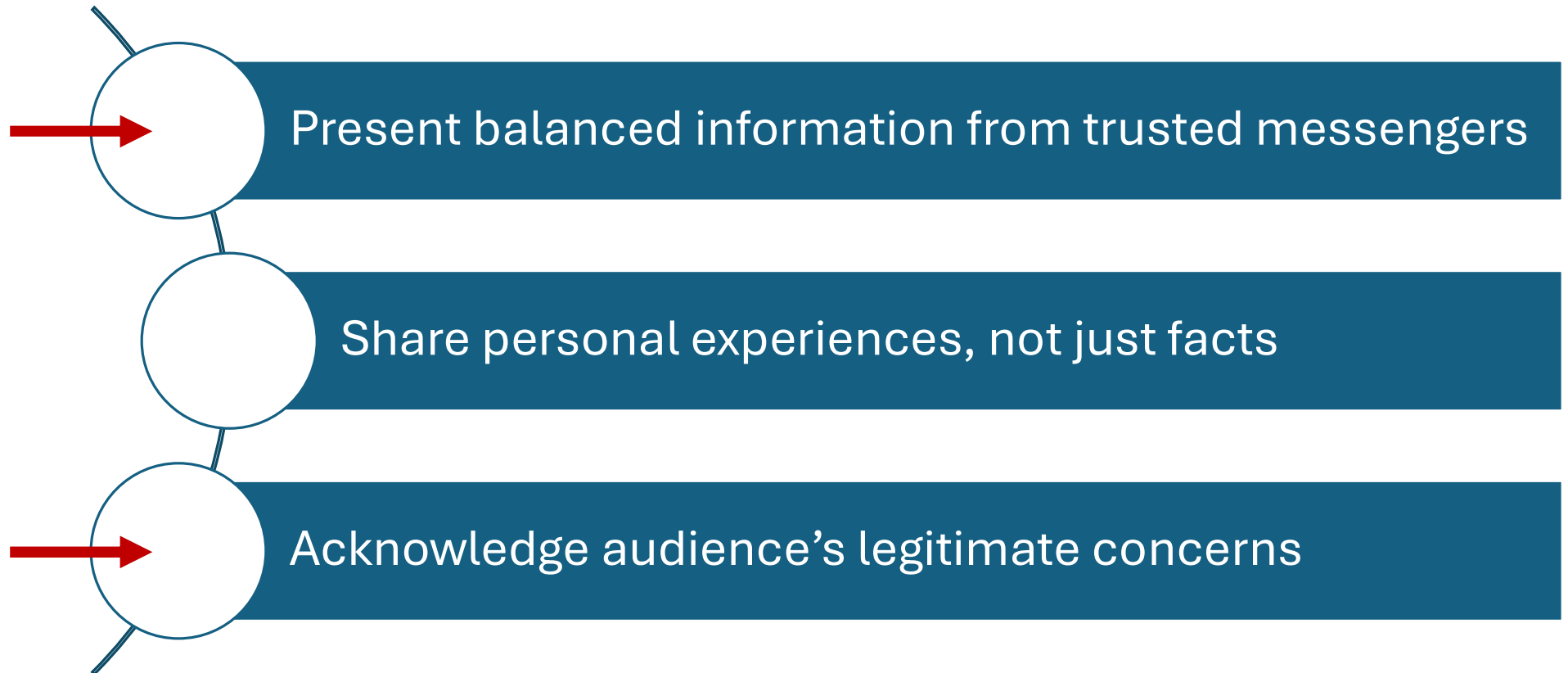
Hatchery debates are polarized

- Interviewees anticipated counter arguments from the “other side”
- Interviews revealed distrust and dislike of opposing groups

Implications

- More evidence won't resolve debates, may increase polarization
- Anticipate biased information processing

Communicating in the face of polarization



Presenting balanced info & acknowledging concerns

Advocates	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emphasizing community and economic benefits• Providing harvest opportunities
Reformers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highlighting past/present science-based improvements• Acknowledging limitations of reform
Balancers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Presenting case-specific cost-benefit analyses• Developing science-based reform guidelines
Skeptics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being transparent about risks• Prioritizing habitat restoration and preventing extinction
Restorers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acknowledging risk and existing wild fish protections• Emphasizing natural process-based restoration

In summary

5 hatchery-
related belief-
based segments

7 definitions of
“wild”

Approach
communication
with polarization
in mind

Future opportunities



Analyzing public comments
and responses



Facilitating (and studying)
public engagement meetings



**Salmonid Hatcheries
Communication Toolkit
2025**





Stay in touch

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