

Discussion Questions

King of Fish: The Thousand-Year Run of Salmon

David R. Montgomery

1. Which story or chapter in *King of Fish: The Thousand-Year Run of Salmon* most engaged you? What information or insight has stayed with you?
2. What parallels did you draw between the reading and situations or stories within your community?
3. In *Chapter 11: The Sixth H* (pages 233-234) Montgomery suggests six actions which, along with reduced fishing pressure and removal of barriers to salmon migration, might aid long-term salmon recovery in the Pacific Northwest.

As an Alaskan, do you feel these recommendations resonate with your experience and knowledge of salmon?

4. After reading about conditions harmful to salmon populations, which do you see as the most urgent to address?
5. *King of Fish* is a history book written from the perspective of a geologist interested in connections between salmon, humans, and changing, dynamic landscapes.

What recurring themes strike you as important, whether from an Alaskan perspective or anywhere else in the world?

6. What topics would be necessary to include if there was an Alaska chapter in *King of Fish*?
7. One challenge for salmon conservation/management in Alaska is conflict between user groups—subsistence users, commercial fisheries, sport fisheries, personal use harvests in urban areas, trawlers, and other land and water uses all must share the same, limited resource and all impact salmon.

What are the barriers or access points that prevent or allow Alaskans to be active in salmon policies?

8. Individuals tend to be most knowledgeable and protective of their own uses of a resource.

What kinds of behavior or actions—regionally or locally—might help people reach a broader view of resources like salmon in Alaska?

9. Though Alaska's rivers are currently in better condition than those described in *King of Fish*, our state faces issues of single species decline, and is midstream in the development of infrastructure and natural resource extraction similar to that discussed in the book.

What lessons can we learn from history to ensure that Alaska's salmon stocks and rivers remain healthy?

10. Consider the following statements by Montgomery—within the context of the state of Alaska:

"We are seldom, if ever, absolutely certain about forecasting the behavior of complex, interacting natural systems, especially for species with complicated life histories. From a public policy perspective, the appropriate question in regard to salmon is whether there is sufficient scientific information upon which informed, responsible management actions can be based—and whether those actions will not only slow but reverse current trends."

"Perhaps the biggest problem lies in the way that individual decisions accumulate into big effects: how land use gradually changed river basins into regions inhospitable to salmon over time spans far longer than social and political processes last."

Do you agree or disagree with these views?

11. We see in *King of Fish* that hatcheries are not necessarily an easy answer when wild salmon stocks decline. **What role do hatcheries play in Alaska?**
12. Montgomery writes that although the transformation of salmon habitat into towns and cities often reduces the capacity of rivers to support salmon, he believes that salmon and civilization can co-exist. On pages 238-240, he offers suggestions for managing population growth and salmon habitat.

Which suggestions might be applicable to those regions of Alaska with concentrated or growing populations?

13. In *King of Fish: The Thousand-Year Run of Salmon*, David Montgomery asks readers: **"What does it say for the long-term prospects of the world's many endangered species if one of the most prosperous regions of the richest country on earth cannot accommodate its icon species?"**

Short on time but still want to be part of the conversation? Montgomery's first and final chapters provide an excellent summary of the thousand-year history of salmon.