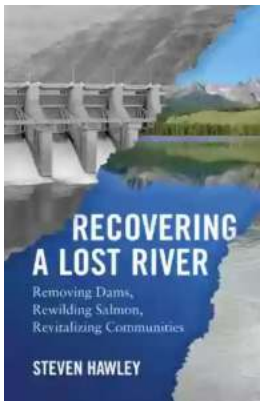
Removing Dams: Rewilding Salmon and Revitalizing Communities

Imagine a river flowing freely, its waters rushing through breathtaking landscapes, carrying life and sustaining the delicate balance of ecosystems. This image may seem idyllic, but unfortunately, it is a rare sight today due to the numerous dams that have been built across the world.

Dams were constructed primarily for harnessing water power, controlling floods, and providing a reliable water supply for irrigation and human consumption. However, their implementation often comes at a great cost to the environment, particularly to the salmon population and the surrounding communities that depend on these magnificent fish for various reasons.



Recovering a Lost River: Removing Dams, Rewilding Salmon, Revitalizing Communities

by Steven Hawley(Kindle Edition)

4.9 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 774 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 282 pages

Salmon: The Keystone Species

Salmon plays a crucial role as a keystone species in many ecosystems. They are born in freshwater rivers, migrate to the ocean to mature, and then return to their birthplace to spawn. This remarkable life cycle not only ensures the survival of salmon but also has far-reaching impacts on the entire ecosystem.

When salmon return to freshwater rivers, they bring with them nutrients from the ocean. These nutrients serve as a vital food source for a variety of organisms, including other fish, birds, mammals, and even insects. The entire ecosystem relies on salmon to thrive.

Moreover, indigenous communities have a deep cultural and spiritual connection with salmon. They have relied on the abundance of this fish for sustenance and cultural practices for thousands of years. However, the construction of dams has severely disrupted the salmon's natural migration patterns and has had devastating consequences on these communities.

Environmental Impact of Dams

The presence of dams impedes the natural flow of rivers and obstructs salmon from reaching their spawning grounds. This has resulted in declining salmon populations and an ecological imbalance in many regions across the globe.

Furthermore, dams alter the physical and chemical characteristics of rivers, often causing downstream areas to suffer from reduced water levels, increased water temperature, and sediment accumulation. These changes have a cascading effect on the entire ecosystem, negatively impacting fish species' survival, wildlife habitats, and overall biodiversity.

Revitalizing Communities through Dam Removal

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the negative environmental impacts of dams, leading to a movement for their removal. Dam removal involves dismantling or modifying existing dams to restore the natural flow of rivers, allowing salmon to freely migrate.

The removal of dams offers multiple benefits for both the environment and local communities. Restored river ecosystems can once again support healthy salmon populations, revitalizing struggling fish species and promoting biodiversity. This, in turn, benefits other wildlife that depend on salmon as a food source.

Indigenous tribes and local communities also benefit from dam removal. Salmon's return means a revival of cultural practices, as well as economic opportunities through sustainable fishing and tourism. A healthy salmon population contributes to a thriving ecosystem and supports the overall well-being of communities that have historically relied on salmon for their livelihoods.

The Success Stories of Dam Removal

Several successful dam removal projects have demonstrated the positive outcomes of restoring rivers and rewilding salmon. One such success story is the Elwha River in Washington State, USA. In 2011, two large dams were removed from the river, allowing salmon to access over 70 miles of previously blocked habitat. Within a few years, the Elwha River witnessed a remarkable resurgence of salmon, bringing life back to the ecosystem and rejuvenating the local community.

Similar success stories can be found in other locations, such as the Penobscot River in Maine, USA, and the Eklutna River in Alaska, USA. These examples have paved the way for further dam removal initiatives across the world.

The Path Forward

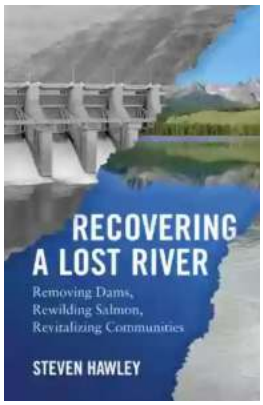
While dam removal may not be feasible or necessary for every dam, it is important to carefully evaluate the environmental impacts and consider the potential benefits before constructing new dams. Alternative solutions, such as

fish ladders and fish bypass systems, can also be implemented to mitigate the negative effects on salmon migration.

Government agencies, environmental organizations, and local communities must work together to find a balance between harnessing water resources and preserving the ecological integrity of river systems. By focusing on sustainable water management practices and prioritizing the rewilding of salmon, we can restore the health of our rivers, revitalize communities, and ensure a harmonious coexistence between humans and the environment.

Removing dams is key to rewilding salmon and revitalizing communities that have been impacted by their presence. It is a step towards restoring the natural balance of ecosystems, ensuring the survival of keystone species like salmon, and preserving the cultural heritage of indigenous communities. By embracing the opportunity to remove dams and restore rivers, we can create a brighter future for both humans and nature.

Remember, the fate of our rivers and salmon lies in our hands. Act now and join the movement to remove dams, rewild salmon, and revitalize communities for a sustainable future.



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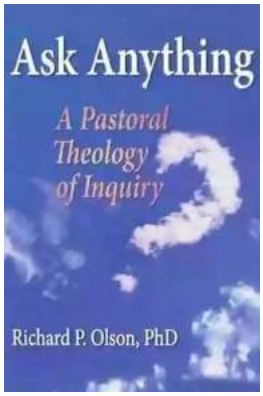
A powerful argument for why dam removal makes good scientific, economic, and environmental sense—and requires our urgent attention

The Snake River, flowing through the Northwest, was once one of the world's greatest salmon rivers. As recently as a hundred years ago, it retained some of its historic bounty with seven million fish coming home to spawn there. Now, due to damming for hydroelectricity over the past fifty years, the salmon population has dropped close to extinction. Efforts at salmon recovery, through fish ladders, hatcheries, and even trucking them over the dams, have failed.

Hawley argues that the solution for the Snake River lies in dam removal, pitting the power authority and Army Corps of Engineers against a collection of conservationists, farmers, commercial and recreational fishermen, and the Nez Perce tribe. He also demonstrates the interconnectedness of the river's health to Orca whales in Puget Sound, local economies, fresh water rights, and energy independence.

This regional battle has garnered national interest, and is part of a widespread river-restoration movement that stretches from Maine's Kennebec to California's Klamath. In one instance, Butte Creek salmon rebounded from a paltry fourteen fish to twenty thousand within just a few years of rewilding their river, showing the incredible resiliency of nature when given the slightest chance. In this timely book, Hawley shows how river restoration, with dam removal as its centerpiece, is not only virtuous ecological practice, but a growing social and economic enterprise.



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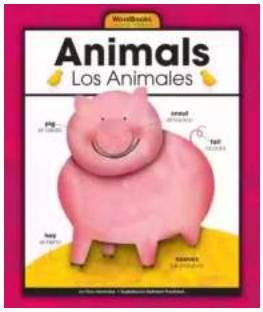

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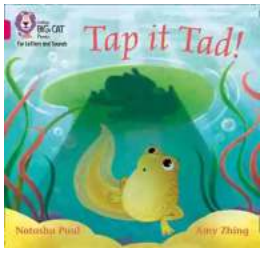

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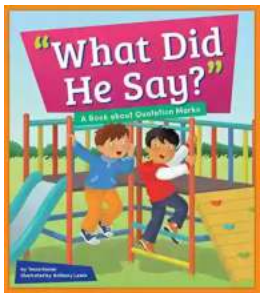

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