

Thank You Gary Loomis

One Year Ago February 14th 2007

Gary Loomis was the main attraction at the South King County Puget Sound Anglers meeting in Des Moines, Washington.

The packed room was riveted to Gary's great presentation. He opened by telling us about *Fish First* and what can be done with some hard work. Fish First's research and experience could only help us with the recovery and enhancement of our native salmon and steelhead runs. Gary's message that anyone can complain about what is or is not being done rang true with all of us. He made it clear that what needs to be done is to pull together and look for real solutions, not just more problems.

Then things got real exciting as Gary introduced the room to the **Coastal Conservation Association (CCA)**. If you haven't been paying attention to all the buzz since Gary began his roadshow with our chapter last year I'll fill you in on what he said. CCA is a non-profit organization comprised of, then, only 15 coastal state chapters (now 17 with WA and OR) spanning the Gulf of Mexico and Atlantic seaboard (and now, of course, the PNW). CCA's strength is drawn from the tens of thousands of recreational anglers who make up its membership. From South Texas to the upper reaches of Maine, now to the PNW, CCA's grassroots influence is felt through state capitals, U.S. Congress and, most importantly, in the conservation and restoration of our marine resources

Gary was working with CCA to start a Pacific Northwest chapter that would give recreational fishermen the representation and big guns we have so long needed. For so many years, we have been working against each other while trying to get the same things accomplished. We usually failed, complaining about what should be done and by whom rather than actually taking action.

CCA told Gary, if he could recruit 1000 new PNW members by the end of March, they would take his campaign seriously and consider starting up in the PNW. I'm proud to say that at our South King County meeting one year ago, we had a large number of folks join, jump starting Gary's effort. It didn't take him long to gather more and he took over 1200 new memberships to CCA's National Board meeting the next month.

One year has passed since that fateful meeting. Gary has spoken at many PSA meetings and anywhere else he can find an interested audience. CCA is growing rapidly and is here to stay. There are now 14 chapters in Washington and Oregon with more in the works. They've hired a permanent Regional Executive Director and an office assistant. Soon, they'll hire a top-tier biologist and a lobbyist.

Every day, I hear or read something new and exciting about CCA. The word is out: CCA is open for business and it is truly amazing what can be done when someone has the passion to make a difference.

Thank You Gary Loomis, for your passion and your commitment!

Now is the time for US to make a difference.

Keep the momentum up, be part of History and Join CCA

<http://www.ccapnw.org/>

Frank Eshpeter

President Washington State CCA SEA-TAC Chapter and South King County PSA