



Donated fish help feed North Coast



North Coast Treatment Manager Jim Sapper with a delivery of donated salmon.

By [CJ Drake](#), OYA Communications
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The [Pacific Whiting Fishery](#) is the largest fishery by volume off the West Coast of the United States and British Columbia. Commercial fishermen in this federally managed fishery target the Pacific hake, but sometimes inadvertently catch salmon and halibut (known as bycatch), which are not allowed to be sold. The fish, however, once caught, can't be put back in the ocean and must be landed.

That's where North Coast YCF in Warrenton comes in.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) takes charge of the salmon and halibut after they are brought to port. The agency carefully tracks and documents the catch. Rather than discard the fish, ODFW donates them to North Coast and other local organizations. "The fish cannot be sold to the public so we're pleased to offer them to North Coast," said Sheryl Flores, an ODFW biologist stationed at the Port of Astoria. "We appreciate this opportunity to prevent waste."

Louise Stecher, executive support specialist at North Coast and Cook Supervisor Mike Edler tell the rest of this "fish story" in a Q&A with *Inside OYA*:

Q. How long has ODFW been donating fish to North Coast?

A. Since before 2000. North Coast is currently the only OYA facility that receives these donations since Astoria is one of two ports where the fish are landed. The other is Newport.

Q. Is North Coast the only recipient of donated fish in the area?

A. There are many agencies throughout Clatsop County that benefit from the donations: the local food bank, numerous shelters, churches and several local programs that provide meals to low income families and seniors.

Q. How many pounds of fish have been donated to North Coast?

A. In 2013, we received 751.7 pounds of salmon and 447.7 pounds of halibut. So far in 2014, we took in 616 pounds of salmon and 73.8 pounds of halibut. We received our most recent donation in July.

Q. How do the fish arrive at North Coast?

A. They are transported straight off the boats iced down and immediately processed by several of our staff who are fillet experts. Group Life Coordinators K. C. Heckenberg, Chris Johanson and Alex Cabalona are always willing to step up to the plate and get the job done. The youth do not participate in the cleaning and preparation of the fish, but do enjoy eating it! These meals are by far the most popular with the staff as well. Maintenance Supervisor Mike Inniss stated, "The fish is

fantastic, wonderful! I wish we could have it more often. It's great for the youth as well. It is clearly a meal they really enjoy." Nurse April Johnson agreed wholeheartedly: "Healthy and fresh – fresh is best! And you can't beat those Omega-3s!"

Q. How are the fish served?

A. The salmon is typically barbequed on the charcoal grill with a variety of different seasoning blends such as lemon pepper or Cajun spice. The halibut is usually prepared in a traditional "fish and chips" style and served with salad, garlic bread and tartar sauce. Also, the garden at North Coast is bursting with fresh vegetables and those make great side dishes.

Q. How many people does a typical donation feed?

A. The amount of the individual donations varies widely. If it's a small donation that isn't sufficient to feed the entire facility, it's frozen and stored. But this is the exception to the rule. Individual donations are typically more than enough to feed the entire facility.

Q. What do the youth think of the donated fish?

A. The vast majority of youth really enjoy these meals, especially the fish and chips. Kitchen youth worker Mason stated, "I like it, it's good. I wish we had more fresh seafood options." Youth were asked for the preferences and salmon was definitely their favorite, but they really liked the halibut, too.