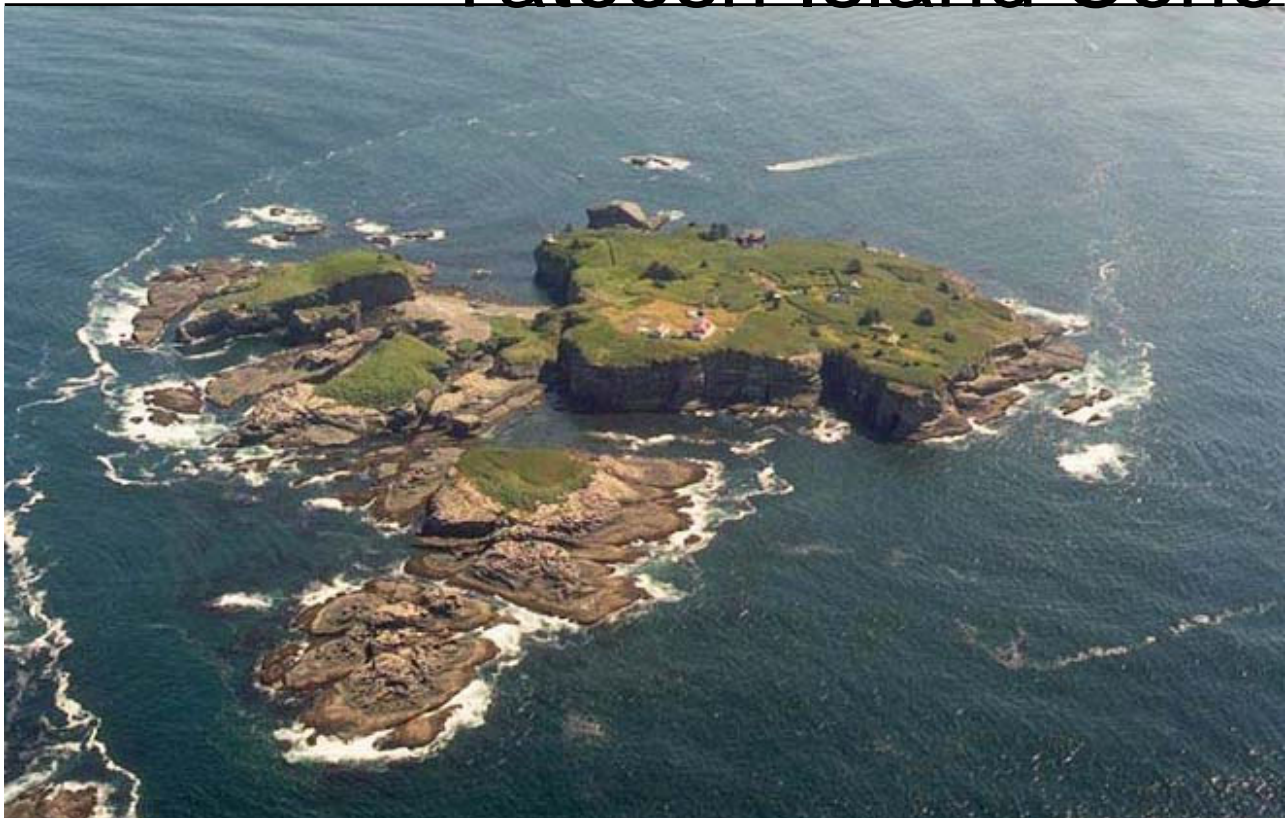


Fishing Scenario ID # 325

©GAMEPLAN

Tatoosh Island Coho



*Here's one of the most productive coho salmon fisheries in the entire Northwest. When conditions are right, anglers employing electronic fishfinders, downriggers with a "dummy" flasher and properly prepared plug-cut herring baits can expect a hook-up rate of 20 cohos per day *per angler*—silver salmon averaging three to eight pounds. While those are the tools and the technique we recommend, for those not so equipped, or inclined, we also offer a less reliable but often exciting jigging option, which at times has helped FC Consultant Dave Vedder put 40 fish into his boat in a single day.*



Tatoosh Coho

Timing Details

- 1. **August 17 through September 6.**
- 2. *Always* check [weather and wind conditions](#) in advance!
- 3. ***Don't go when*** high winds are forecast!
- 4. Remember the "Fourth Trip" Rule – it can take as many as four trips to a specific scenario location to learn it well enough to catch up to full potential. For your first three trips, focus on following the Game Plan, also on learning and experimenting! Ideally don't give up, even if you get skunked, until after four trips.



[photo courtesy of wdfw.wa.gov/gallery](http://photo.courtesy.of.wdfw.wa.gov/gallery)

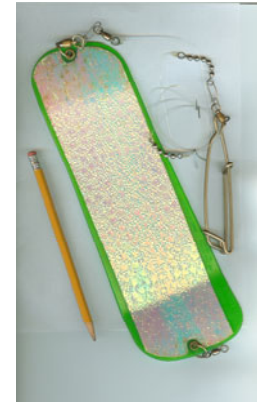
Equipment/Tackle

- 1. A seaworthy boat of 17 feet or more!
- 2. [Nautical charts](#).
- 3. A GPS (and experience using it!)
- 4. Safety gear (See [Fishing Coaches Reminder List: Boats](#))
- 5. 7 to 7.5 foot rods light-heavy action rods—steelhead tackle will do in a pinch—and conventional reels carrying a minimum of 250 hundred yards of 12-pound test line. *We strongly advise you have two rods per angler, both rigged and ready at all times.*
- 6. Polarized sunglasses: amber lens for low light, gray for bright.

Equipment Tackle (con't)

FOR STANDARD AND "DUMMY" DOWNRIGGER APPROACHES

- 1. A manual or electric downrigger. (For a general description of downriggers see www.scotty.com.)
- 2. For "dummy-flasher" setup:
 - a. 11-inch (not 8") Hotspot™ brand flashers, green blade on one side and chrome on the other.
 - b. 80 lb. test monofilament
 - c. four or six bead stainless steel swivels whitesboots.com
 - d. # 5 stainless snap swivels
 - e. Scotty Snapper Release Clips
 - f. Downrigger stacker release clips
 - g. #5 Sampo ball-bearing snap swivels



- 3. For three anglers, **at least** 4-dozen fresh or frozen herring in the "Red or Green Label" sizes, per day, with plastic Tupperware™ containers and paper towels for storing these.
- 4. Brining solution, or rock salt (not table salt.)
- 5. A herring cutting guide tool to help you consistently get the proper angle, such as the Folbe™ "Coho" model (see www.folbe.com under "miscellaneous," or email david@folbe.com for a retailer near you), or the Danielson™ tool on the "coho" setting.
- 6. For building herring leaders:
 - a. # 5 Sampo™ swivels
 - b. Spools of 10 lb. test Maxima Ultragreen™
 - c. # 2/0 Mustad 9263 hooks (heavier gage hooks tear the plug-cut herring.) **Sharpen them.**
- 7. #4 or #5 Coyote Spoons™, in case you run out of bait.



FOR TATOOSH JIGGING OPTION

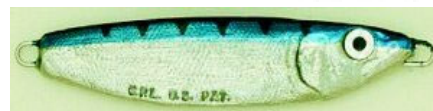
- 1. Selection of the following lures in two- to four-ounce sizes:
 - a. Zzingers™ www.tyeetackle.com/zzinger.htm
 - b. Crippled Herring™ www.cabelas.com
 - c. Buzz Bombs™ www.tyeetackle.com/buzzbom

Colors should include:
 all white
 white/green
 white/blue
 white/pink

a.



b.



c.



- 2. Optional: Dale suggests adding "Smelly Jelly—Shrimp/Salty Sticky Liquid" to jigs and lures.

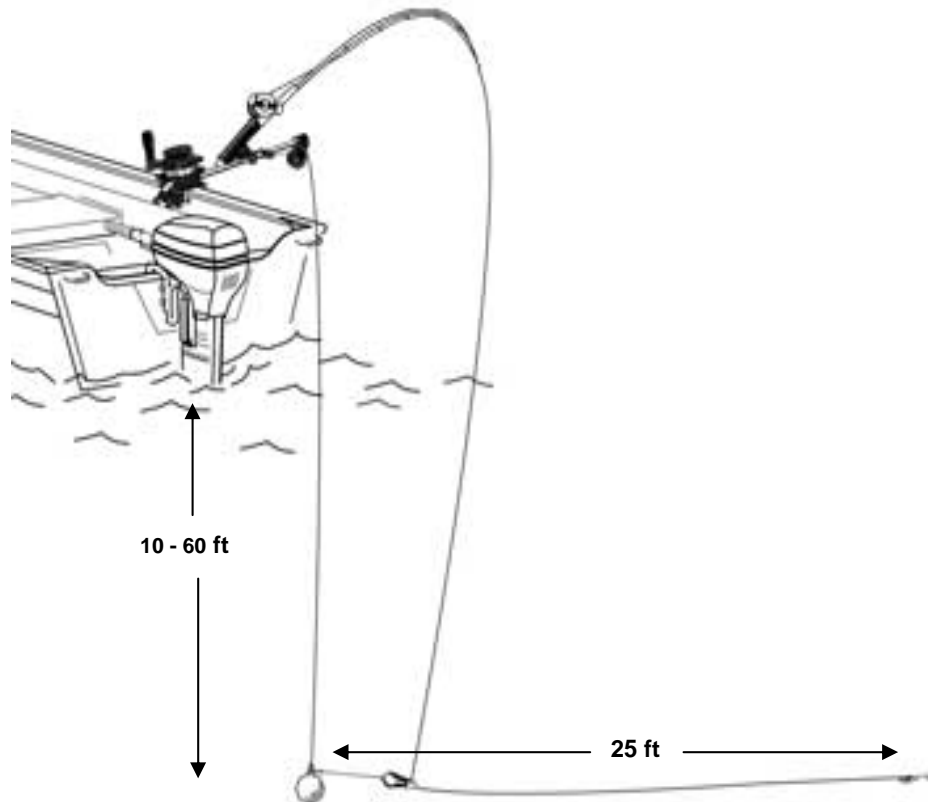


Tatoosh Coho Rigging

STANDARD AND DUMMY FLASHER DOWNRIGGER APPROACHES

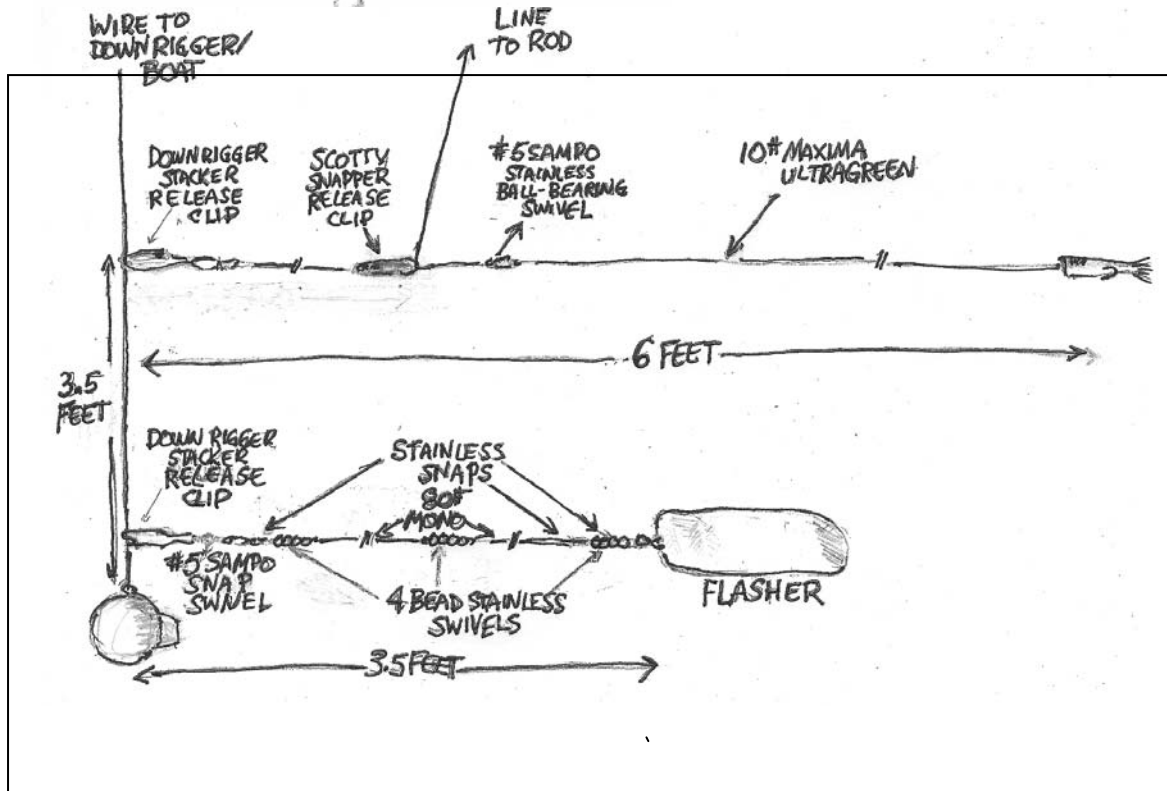
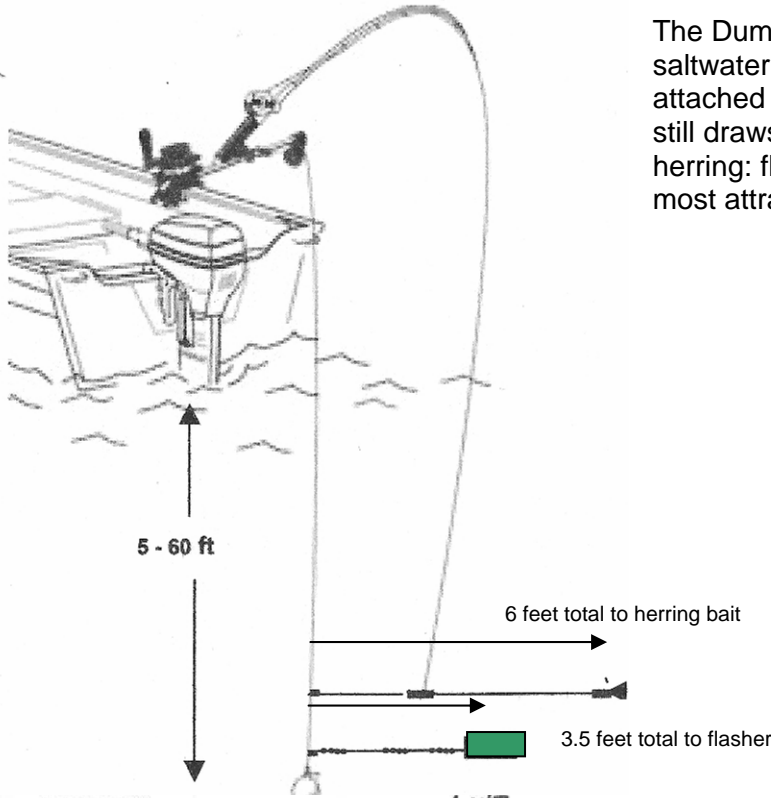
- 1. The night before a Tatoosh trip, brine all whole herring baits. For a full description of how-to-brine, see "How to brine herring" at www.salmonuniversity.com. Alternatively, use FC's simpler system: dissolve four cups of *rock salt* in a gallon of water, add herring, let stand over night. *Brining is a simple, important step that will make baits tough enough to stay on the hook.*
- 2. "Plug-cut" brined herring baits using a *sharp* knife. A Folbe™ or Danielson™ herring cutting guide tool will help to consistently get the proper angle, but for illustrations showing how to proceed without one see [herring prep](#). Prepare about 2.5 dozen herring baits to start the day. Store cold in a small Tupperware™-type container with a paper towel on the bottom
- 3. For each angler in the boat, for each day, pre-tie three five-foot leaders, each with a # 5 Sampo brand swivel at one end and a size 2/0 Mustad 9263 hook at the other.
- 4. If you do have two rods per angler, keep spares rigged with herring to avoid wasted time. *This can increase your catch rate by over 20 per cent.*
- 5. Figure below shows a downrigger set-up, *without* a flasher rig. This technique is roughly 75 per cent as effective as the dummy flasher rig described on the next page.

Standard Downrigger Trolling Technique



Rigging (con't)

The Dummy Flasher Rig takes advantage of saltwater cohos instinct to chase. While not attached to the fishing line itself, the flasher still draws silvers in range of the plug-cut herring: flasher and bait together create the most attractive and effective combination.





Tatoosh Coho Techniques

STANDARD AND DUMMY FLASHER DOWNRIGGER APPROACHES

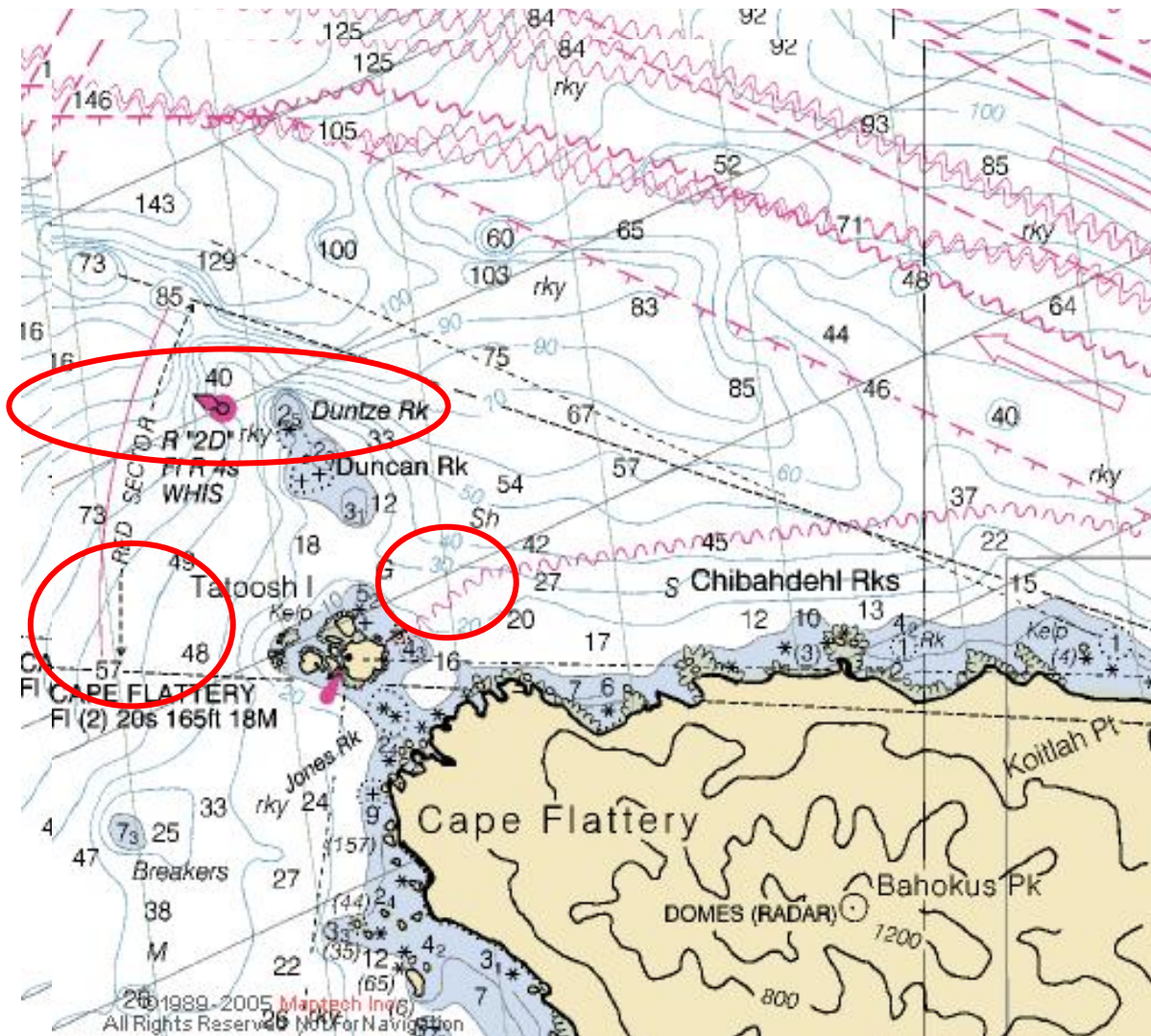
- 1. Be on the water by daylight, cohos bite best then.
- 2. Test each cut bait by pulling beside the boat. Make sure you get a *tight* SPINNING action – not spinning but wagging back and forth. If the action's wrong, toss bait and rig another! For a video showing that action, see www.salmonuniversity.com
- 3. Attach line to Offshore™ brand release clip. For standard approach bait should trail 25 feet behind downrigger. For Dummy approach, only 6 feet.
- 4. Always baby your baits, lowering them slowly so they don't pull loose!
- 5. Troll **with** the current at about 1.8 knots, as assessed by a surface paddle wheel speed gauge attached to your boat **not** per your GPS, which will fail to compensate for currents. The goal is to maintain just enough speed to keep the herring spinning continuously.
- 6. Watch rod tips like a hawk! If you see a tip dip and bob, but get no hook-up... **wait** 60 seconds, in case a fish is still following, then check bait!
- 7. If no strikes after seven minutes, **tops**, check bait to make sure its action is right. When you present again, change downrigger depth by ten feet, working from 10 to 60 feet deep.
- 8. Move the downrigger deeper as the day wears on.
- 9. If you run out of herring, use a #4 or #5 Coyote spoon #4 or 5. (For best results, ask at the Big Salmon Resort for the size and color they recommend.) Note: this spoon typically performs about half as well as herring. Troll at between 1.6 and 2.0 knots.
- 10. If you get a strike, immediately troll back through same area! *You've found fish, don't lose them!*

SPECIAL NOTES ON DUMMY FLASHER TECHNIQUE

- 1. While it's often difficult for novices to believe, when cohos are feeding on top they are actually attracted to prop wash, probably because it resembles a panicked school of baitfish. When this is the case, the Dummy technique can produce one of the most exciting strikes—silvers racing up to take a lure just beneath the surface and hardly a rod length from the stern!

"While fishing only a few inches below the surface is usually not the most productive of trolling techniques," FC President Dale Dorcas admits, "that's probably for the best, unless you actually have a cardiologist and a crash cart right there in the boat with you."

Location Details



see.mapserver.maptech.com

- 1. **Safety First!** Keep a keen eye out for rocks and floating logs. Be especially observant of ships when in the shipping lanes. *Without radar, don't enter the lanes when visibility is less than a mile.*
- 2. Watch for salmon or schools of bait on your fish finder, also for leaping salmon, bait striking the surface, and diving birds! (Remember: Cohos will usually be nearer the surface under low light conditions, deeper when light is bright.)
- 3. Head for the areas within the red circles of this map. Look for *tide rips* – places where slick water is met by rippled water, often defined by lines of debris collected on the surface! Begin fishing at or near the edge of these rips, ideally on the smooth, non-debris side.
- 4. If no strikes within 15 minutes, **move to another spot!**
- 5. If you find and lose track of a school of coho, try moving *eastward*, since coho often migrate from west to east as the day goes on.



Tatoosh Island Coho Rigging/Techniques

DAVE VEDDER'S JIGGING OPTION

Note: per FC's expert Dave Vedder, jigging can "work wonderfully at times, but it "can also leave you skunked." While not as *reliably* productive as fishing cut herring with downriggers, it sure is fun!

About Jigging: cast and allow lure to sink to desired depth. Begin retrieve by quickly lifting your rod tip anywhere from six inches to six feet. Vary lifts so the jig produces erratic action. As you drop the rod down, allow enough slack line that jig can free fall. *Most takes will come on the fall*, so pause one or two seconds as the line tightens: strike hard if you feel tension, or see the line twitch.



- 1. See first "Location Details" for downrigger techniques (above). (Note: Dave heads for water 150 to 500 feet deep.)
- 2. When you see fish working the surface, motor to within a long cast. Kill or idle engine.
- 3. Cast ten feet in front of fish and begin jigging as soon as the lure hits the water. If no take, let the next cast drop four feet deeper, the next four more feet,
- 4. If no strikes, drop jig to 20 feet, then begin rapid retrieve. Drop jig five feet deeper on each successive cast. (Remember, by noon on a bright day, coho may drop to 80 – 100 feet!)
- 5. Work an area for 15 minutes, ***then move to another spot!***



Tatoosh Coho

Location - General



Services and Facilities:

- 1. While a variety of services are available in Neah Bay, members will launch at Big Salmon Resort (\$7 fee), which can also provide tackle and bait, moorage, marine fuel, hot meals, a deli, a general merchandise store, boat rentals, ice and lodging, along with referrals for lodging and camping. 866 787 1900, 1251 Bayview Ave., Neah Bay, WA 98357, also bigsalmonresort.com. Open from 4:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- 2. To reach Neah Bay, take Highway 101 from Port Angeles, traveling west until the turn off at Highway 112. Continue on Hwy 112 for 66 miles, directly into the middle of the town. Count on about a five-hour trip from Seattle.