Blue Salmon: 100% Fish

A 10-minute teacher-led mini-lesson for grades 3–8

Pair it with the Blue Salmon board game (AlaSkins Discovery) and the companion worksheet.

Time: 10 minutes **Materials:** whiteboard or chart paper, markers, companion worksheet (optional)

Big idea: A fish is worth much more when we use all of it, and that choice helps both nature and the economy.

Students will be able to:

- Describe how fish move from the water to a customer (the fish economy)
- Explain why using every part of a fish has become less common
- Name at least one environmental and one economic benefit of using the whole fish

0:00–1:30 | Hook: What happens to the rest?

Hold up (or draw) a whole fish. Ask: *"When you order a fish sandwich, which part of the fish do you eat? What do you think happens to the rest?"*

Take two or three quick answers. Then say: *"For a lot of fish, up to half the weight is not the fillet. Today we'll find out where that other half goes, and where it could go."*

1:30–4:00 | The Fish Economy in 4 Steps

Draw four boxes in a row on the board and explain each in a sentence or two:

1. **Harvest:** Fishers catch fish following rules such as seasons and catch limits. Break the rules, like fishing over the limit or in a closed area, and you can be fined, just like in the game.
2. **Processing:** Plants clean, cut and package the fish. This is where the choice happens: keep only the fillets, or use the skin, heads, bones, roe and oil too.
3. **Selling:** Fish and fish products go to stores, restaurants and other businesses.
4. **Customers:** People buy food, pet treats, supplements, even leather goods.

Write on the board: *value-added product* (a raw fish turned into something worth more) and *full utilization* (using every part of the fish).

4:00–6:00 | Why Using the Whole Fish Has Become Rare

Say: *"Long ago, people in many fishing cultures used nearly everything: meat for food, skins for clothing and bags, bones and oil for many other uses. Today, in many places, a lot of the fish gets thrown away or sold for very little. Why?"* Let students guess first, then fill in any missing reasons:

- **Customers mostly want fillets,** so those are the products processors know how to sell.
- **It takes equipment and workers** to turn heads, skins and bones into something sellable.
- **Remote locations:** many fishing towns are far from markets and factories that could use the leftovers, so shipping costs are high.
- **Habit and low prices:** leftovers have often been seen as "trash," so there was little reason to invest in new products.

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Teacher tip: how much gets used varies by species, region and company. Some Alaska fisheries already use most of each fish. Check local numbers before sharing exact percentages.

6:00–8:30 | The Impacts of Using the Whole Fish

Draw a two-column chart labeled Environment and Economy. Ask students for ideas first, then add these:

ENVIRONMENT	ECONOMY
• Less waste: fewer fish parts dumped, buried or left to rot near plants and communities • Less pressure on wild fish: if each fish earns more, the same income can come from catching fewer • Less need for other resources: byproducts can replace ingredients in pet food, fertilizer and feed • Respect for the resource: using what we take is a core idea of sustainable fishing	• More money per fish: a value-added product sells for more than raw scraps • New jobs: designing, making and selling products creates work in coastal towns • New businesses: fish-skin leather, supplements, pet treats and more • Lower disposal costs: companies spend less to get rid of waste

Be honest about the trade-offs: new equipment costs money, remote towns face shipping costs, and new products need customers. Using the whole fish takes planning and investment.

8:30–10:00 | Wrap-Up and Connect to the Game

Ask students to turn to a partner for 30 seconds: *"Pick one fish part and name something it could become."* Take two or three answers.

Close with: *"In the game, you earn more when you make new products and lose out when you break the rules. In real life, fishers and processors face those same choices. Using the whole fish is good for the water and good for the wallet."* Hand out the worksheet or assign it as follow-up.

Quick Discussion Questions (if time allows)

- **Grades 3–5:** Why do you think some people throw away fish skin and bones? What could we make from them instead?
- **Grades 6–8:** Who benefits when a fishing town uses the whole fish? Who might pay the costs of getting started?
- **All grades:** How are fines and catch limits connected to keeping fish around for the future?

Quick Check for Understanding

Ask for a thumbs up, sideways or down: *"I can name one environmental benefit and one economic benefit of using the whole fish."* Follow up with anyone showing sideways or down during the worksheet.

Extension Ideas

- Invite a local fisher, processor or chef to talk about how they use byproducts
- Have students research one value-added fish product and present it in a minute

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- Compare the price of a raw fillet to a canned, smoked or packaged product

Facts here are general and may differ by species and region. Confirm local statistics before sharing exact numbers with students.

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