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STRONG RUNS

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(THIS) Finding cold water
PHOTO: Russ Ricketts

STRONG RUNS

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The earth is what we all have in common — Wendell Berry

(COVER) North Creek
PHOTO: Conrad Gowell

WENATCHEE WATERSHED COLD WATER CAMPAIGN

WORDS BY
Russ Ricketts,
Wenatchee River Steward

(ABOVE)
Icicle River, WA

PHOTO:
Leah Hemberry

HOW CAN YOU HELP?
To learn more, volunteer, and/or donate to this campaign check out nativefishsociety.org/get-involved

Last year, during a June river snorkel on the Wenatchee River I stumbled upon dozens of adult bull trout, salmon, and steelhead sheltering in the frigid outflow of a small creek. At first, it was exhilarating to see so many big fish tucked so closely together. In the low and clear summer flows, little was obscured – it was surreal – like finding an aquarium stuffed wall to wall with my favorite native fish.

Then, I was hit by a sinking realization. These fish were huddled together because they were fighting for their lives. The tiny creek's outflow created a ribbon of cold water that functioned like an oasis within the otherwise hot Wenatchee. The survival of these fish relied entirely on the tiny creek and its trickle of cold water.

For many of us, the summer of 2015 was a wake up call. River loving people across the Northwest witnessed first hand as the specter of climate change shifted from vague prediction to backyard reality. Most poignantly for native fish, June's triple digit temperatures combined with record low snowpack spelled disaster for nearly half a million Columbia River salmon, steelhead, and trout, which perished due to high water temperatures before they could complete their annual spawning migration.

Last summer's extreme conditions prompted me to ask several questions about my homewaters: Does the Wenatchee contain enough cold water habitat to support both young and adult fish, especially during the summer and early fall? Do certain cold water areas play an especially critical role in protecting upriver migrating fish that are forced to navigate rapids or dams? Have all these cold water areas been catalogued and are they protected from the human activities that would increase their temperatures or reduce their flows?

To begin answering these questions, I met with Native Fish Society staff, state, local, and federal fisheries biologists. After a few months work it became clear that too little was known about these important places. As a result, NFS staff and I developed a project to identify, assess, and monitor the cold water refuges in the mainstem Wenatchee River during the summer of 2017.

To get a complete picture of these cold water refuges, a few different data gathering techniques will be used. First, to gauge the extent and duration of cold water refuges, tiny digital temperature monitors will be placed at the outflow of 12 small tributary streams. Additionally, new advances in technology mean we can utilize forward-looking (FLIR) cameras and recreational unmanned aerial

WENATCHEE WATERSHED COLD WATER CAMPAIGN

(LEFT)
Chiwawa River, WA

PHOTO:
Russ Ricketts

(RIGHT)
Russ Ricketts

PHOTO:
Leah Hemberry

vehicles (UAVs) to collect overhead thermal imaging, which will help us locate and detail the size of these cold water areas. To assess which cold water refuges are the most hospitable for fish, a number of environmental factors will be measured and scored including depth, flow, riparian habitat, woody structure, and location. Last, snorkel surveys will determine the presence of different fish species and catalog their varying life stages to get a baseline understanding of native fish currently using these refuges.

Taken together, these factors will be crunched into a score for each cold water area, which will help wild fish advocates, fisheries agencies, habitat restoration entities, and land-use decision makers based in the Wenatchee watershed understand which cold water refuges are currently the most vital for native fish and where additional cold water habitats are needed. As it stands, land use regulations largely ignore intermittent streams too small for fish passage. And yet, it's our hypothesis that these small streams will play a critical role in our evolving climate landscape.

How can you help?

Right now Native Fish Society is raising support for our Wenatchee Cold Water Campaign. Your donations will help us purchase equipment, conduct fieldwork, and compile our study's results into a report that can be accessed free to the public. Once we have the equipment on hand, we hope to deploy similar studies on watersheds across the Northwest with the help of our River Steward community. There are also some great incentives for those who contribute to this crowd funding effort – to check them out and donate head to nativefishsociety.org/get-involved.

Second, we hope to challenge you to look carefully at your own watershed in a new way and take your own citizen science findings to the people who might otherwise ignore these small, yet critical, sources of cold water. The Wenatchee isn't the only watershed that needs its cold water refuges protected!

To get started, buy a water thermometer and use it to identify thermal refuges in your homewaters. Investigate and ask tough questions that demand answers. Share your findings. Explore rivers both above and below the surface. Get involved. My work as a River Steward is more than reforming hatcheries and removing dams, it's to learn and then teach and most of all act on behalf of the creatures that cannot speak for themselves.

FOLLOWING THROUGH

NORTH CREEK CAMPAIGN

WORDS BY
Matt Lund,
Siletz River Steward

(ABOVE)
Matt Lund looks down the barrel of the North Creek culvert.

PHOTO:
Conrad Gowell

HOW CAN YOU HELP?
To learn more, volunteer, and/or donate to this campaign check out nativefishsociety.org/get-involved

The sun begins to glimmer, illuminating the highest hills in the coast range. My truck rattles down a gravel road leading to an intimate Oregon coastal stream within the Siuslaw National Forest: a place filled with mist, moss, cyan colored water, sitkas, cedars, bald eagles, and wild winter steelhead. This is a love at first sight kind of watershed.

Later, through years of stewardship and streamside friendships, I learned that this watershed is also a remarkable example of nature's resiliency. It was logged extensively until the 1970s. Hatchery steelhead programs persisted until 1992. The estuary was diked and channelized.

It was through the action of the late Ben Schaad that this stream's declining trajectory reversed. His expertise and vocal support was a key factor improving its once poor forestry practices, while also removing all hatchery fish from the system. The stream has rebounded greatly since the forest has grown back and wild anadromous fish runs are currently strong. Despite these positive changes, a few old challenges persist and require our attention.

One of these challenges is a culvert constructed in the 1950s at the base of North Creek -- the second largest tributary present within the basin. North Creek has the coolest stream temperatures in the watershed, is surrounded by extensive old growth forest, and has great spawning grounds for all forms of anadromous fish. Before the culvert's placement, North Creek was a very productive tributary, especially for Chinook salmon. Currently, the culvert cuts off thirteen miles of fish passage and degrades downstream habitat. These factors motivated me to focus my stewardship efforts on replacing this old culvert with new fish friendly passage.

Over time I learned that the Forest Service and watershed councils had considered this project previously, but due to high cost estimates it was not pursued further. I felt that given the proper timing and connections, this project could and should become a reality. Restoring access to North Creek would be great for wild, native fish.

The opportune moment presented itself at the start of 2015. Coincidentally, I had moved to Michigan the year before to pursue a master's degree in Physical Therapy. I realized that I needed to target the primary decision makers and convince the Forest Service that this was a project worth prioritizing. Taking the initiative, I began to generate public support within the conservation community while also writing letters to the Forest Service and watershed councils. The result was the formation of a committed group of constituents who began the process of replacing the culvert with a more suitable structure.

Currently, the Forest Service and watershed council's efforts have generated roughly half of the estimated $500,000 needed to complete the project. We will be moving from planning to implementation this autumn, replacing the 13-foot diameter culvert with a bridge structure spanning approximately 50 feet. The North Creek Culvert Project is scheduled for completion during the summer of 2018.

Being an active participant in this project has given me confidence in the power of persistence, commitment, and collaboration. I will be graduating and moving back to Oregon next year and I am excited to soon be able to drive with my sons across a newly constructed North Creek Bridge as we experience rehabilitation in action. This stream's trees, canyon walls, fish, and birds all intertwine and keep me captivated, inspiring me to accomplish more.

In the time that remains, our coalition will increase public awareness around the project and work to secure the $250,000 needed to complete the project.

COALITION SCIENCE

KEEP 'EM WET.
2016 INITIATIVE

WILD STEELHEAD AIRTIME

Bulkley River Steelhead Catch & Release Study

WORDS BY
Mark Sherwood, Communications Director
& Dr. Andy J. Danylchuk

(ABOVE)
Some types of air exposure are preferable to others.

PHOTO:
Derek Botchford

HOW CAN YOU HELP?
Learn more about the study and donate at nativefishsociety.org/get-involved

Catch-and-release is often used as a tool for the conservation of recreationally targeted fish, and this is certainly the case for steelhead. However, despite its iconic status, very little research has been conducted on wild steelhead to determine the fate of fish that are caught and then released – especially concerning impacts related to the duration of air exposure.

As a part of Native Fish Society's "Keep 'Em Wet" initiative, our effort to increase angler awareness about the negative effects of air exposure on wild fish, we're partnering with Dr. Andy J. Danylchuk (University of Massachusetts Amherst) and Dr. Steven Cooke (Carleton University) to study the impacts of catch-and-release on wild steelhead caught and released in the Bulkley River in British Columbia.

Teams of anglers and members of the collaborative research team will conduct this study during the fall 2016 steelhead season. The study has intentionally engaged a broad constituency from British Columbia Fish and Wildlife, the Wet'suwet'en First Nations, the Bulkley River Lodge, Patagonia World Trout, the Freshwater Fisheries Society of British Columbia, Northern Branch of the Steelhead Society of BC, the Wild Steelhead Coalition and angling businesses including Oscar's Fly Shop in Smithers, B.C.

Dr. Danylchuk's and Dr. Cooke's experience conducting similar catch-and-release survival studies on nearly a dozen sport fish species around the world has led them to a standardized, rapid assessment approach, that happens in collaboration with local and regional stakeholders. This collaborative approach is critical in our view, as angling behaviors are unlikely to adapt to the results of a study unless local and regional stakeholders directly participate in the research, and as a result, take ownership for and help disseminate the study's results.

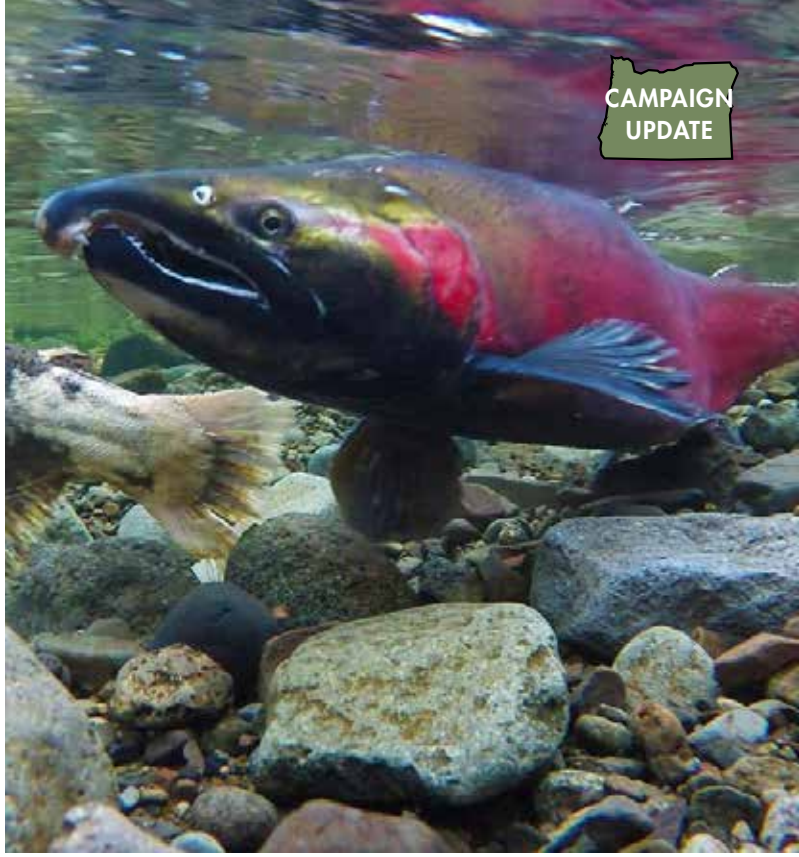
Deliverables from this type of research include scientifically generated best practices for catch and release, scientific papers, popular media articles, and outreach materials for anglers.

Steelhead are by far the most iconic salmonid in North America, if not the world. These incredible fish have great cultural value to First Nations, immense ecological importance to watersheds and are a key driver of recreation based rural economies. We believe that conducting this study will have a broad impact on the way that anglers handle steelhead during their catch-and-release, not only in British Columbia, but also in the lower 48 where most steelhead populations are protected under the Endangered Species Act, but regularly removed from the water during angling. As steelhead anglers, we all have a deep passion for these incredible fish.

With the help of this study we can ensure that as a community, our angling practices do as little harm as possible, and ensure that the life changing opportunity of catching and releasing a wild steelhead will be available for the next generation.

NO NEW 49ERS

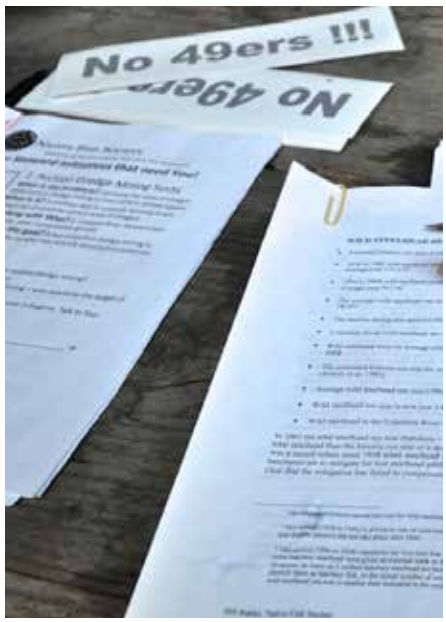
OREGON SUCTION DREDGE MINING CAMPAIGN

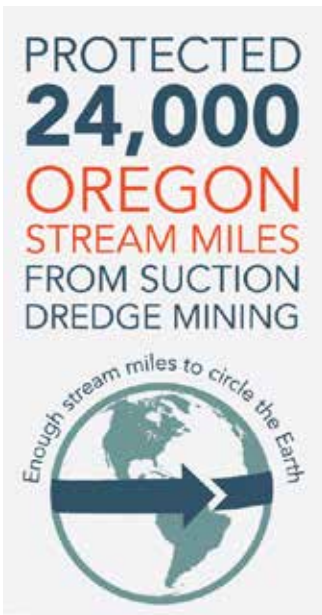


Little did we know back in 2012, when River Steward Stan Petrowski briefed us about the dramatic increase of suction dredge mining in Oregon's South Umpqua River, that it would take four years to see light at the end of our Oregon campaign. Following a 2011 California statewide moratorium on the use of gasoline-powered dredges in gold mining, hobbyist miners flooded into southern Oregon and concentrated in sensitive salmon areas, especially in the Rogue and South Umpqua rivers.

Stan immediately saw the effects of the new wave of gold rushers (See "Gambling Salmon Recovery" in Strong Runs - Summer 2013) as miners leveled millions of dollars of publicly funded habitat restoration in streams his Tiller, OR based community partnership had worked to rehabilitate for threatened coho and spring Chinook salmon.

Many river users throughout southern Oregon had similar experiences and within a year a coalition of anglers, rafters, local businesses, and NGOs coalesced to tackle the challenges posed by suction dredge mining. Native Fish Society and Stan, in collaboration with Rogue Riverkeeper, WaterWatch, Rogue Fly Fishers, Fly Water Travel, and Cascadia Wild worked with Senator Alan Bates of Medford, Oregon to pass legislation (SB 838) in 2013 that would implement a temporary ban on suction dredge mining in all essential salmonid habitats starting in 2016 if permanent improvements to Oregon's mining regulations weren't adopted by the legislature within three years.





Flashing forward to 2016, despite a consistent effort from the mining lobby to undermine permanent improvements to state mining regulations, on January 1st Oregon began its 5-year temporary ban on suction dredge mining. This current moratorium prohibits suction dredge mining in all essential salmon habitat across the state – protecting 24,000 stream miles in the process.

In 2017, Native Fish Society, Stan, and our coalition will continue to work to permanently improve Oregon's mining laws, while we fight a similar front in Washington, which is experiencing the same wave of miners looking to take advantage of less restrictive regulations. Thank you everyone who has helped make Oregon's recent moratorium possible, and keep your eyes out for opportunities to reform the practice in Washington in the coming year.

WORDS BY
Jake Crawford, Southern Regional Manager &
Stan Petrowski, SF Umpqua River Steward

(TOP)
Threatened Coho salmon

(MIDDLE)
No New 49ers & 2016's progress

(BOTTOM)
Stan Petrowski, SF Umpqua River Steward at
2012 River Steward Gathering

OREGON'S NEW STATE SCENIC WATERWAYS

WORDS BY
Mark Sherwood, Communications Director

(ABOVE)
The Chetco River, quite scenic

PHOTO:
Zach Collier

(NEXT)
Swinging flies on the Molalla River

PHOTO:
Ed Hepp III

HOW CAN YOU HELP?
Stand by...the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation will nominate 1-3 Oregon rivers in late 2016 or early 2017 for the next round of designations.

In November of 2011, River Steward and legislative advocate Jim Myron wrote then Governor Kitzhaber a letter concerned that Oregon had not designated a single State Scenic Waterway in over 20 years. Thankfully, Jim's letter to Kitzhabter got the ball rolling. Soon after, the Governor directed the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation to work up a short list of streams eligible for the designation.

A year later, Native Fish Society's staff learned that the Molalla and Chetco rivers made the short list. Two local River Stewards jumped into action: Mark Schmidt on the Molalla and Sunny Bourdon on the Chetco. These stewards worked with our staff and rallied their community members and local businesses to support new protections for their homewaters and wild fish.

After rounds of public meetings and public comment opportunities (thank you for signing our action alerts) the final tally resulted in a full 99% of the comments received by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department favoring State Scenic Waterways designation for both the Chetco and Molalla. The designation of both rivers was also roundly supported by the Clackamas and Curry County Commissioners.

Less than five years after Jim's initial letter, Native Fish Society staff and River Stewards celebrated as Governor Brown officially designated 28 miles of new State Scenic Waterways in the Molalla and Chetco rivers, areas now protected from damming, dewatering and mining.

In total, Oregon's system of State Scenic Waterways now protects 21 rivers and one mountain lake for a total of 1,177 stream miles. Sometimes even good laws require the impetus of a few knowledgeable and caring Stewards to get them back in motion, in this case protecting Oregon's finest rivers.

Back in 1970, Oregonians established the Oregon State Scenic Waterways Program by way of referendum in a 2-1 public vote. Oregon's state program was inspired by the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act established by Congress just two years prior in 1968, "to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations." Likewise, Oregon's state program promotes the stewardship of the state's remarkable free flowing rivers and seeks first and foremost to prevent the future damming of Oregon's rivers.

While the two laws may initially appear redundant, in practice they work in concert, with federally designated Wild and Scenic River segments typically found on federally managed lands and state designated Scenic Waterway segments generally found on state or private lands. As a result, in Oregon, there's a river protection mechanism for streams no matter their adjacent land ownership.

In addition to preventing dams, Oregon's State Scenic Waterways Act features a few additional safeguards for wild, native fish worth noting. One of those additional safeguards is a provision for scenic instream flow allocations.

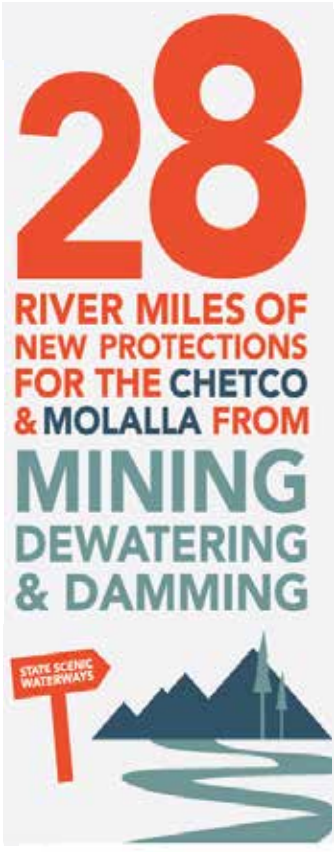
The concept is simple: without adequate flows Oregon's designated rivers cannot support the fish and recreation values for which they were designated. In partnership with the Oregon Water Resources Board, the Oregon Parks and Recreation staff and the community stakeholder teams allocate all or a high percentage of the unappropriated water (water not currently bound to a water right) instream to benefit fish and recreational uses. While this doesn't impact new summer flow allocations (most Oregon streams are already over appropriated during the summer) it does limit new seasonal water rights, especially during the winter months when streams carry unallocated flows.

Additionally, this provision protects streamflows year round from groundwater pumping. The best example of how this works can been seen on the Deschutes River where a measurable reduction in streamflows has been tied directly to groundwater pumping. As a result of the designation, the state is prohibited from issuing new permits for wells unless there is mitigation, which for the Deschutes, spawned its current groundwater mitigation program.

Last, State Scenic Waterway designation protects Oregon's rivers and native fish from suction dredge mining, which involves gas powered dredges, which vacuum up the streambed in search of gold. I'll spare you the details (check "No New 49ers" on pg. 7 if you're interested in learning more) but one of the few permanent ways Oregon can limit this harmful mining practice is through our State Scenic Waterway designation.

Perhaps the best news of all is that Oregon's State Scenic Waterways program is back in action. Stay tuned over the next few months as the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation releases their next list of eligible streams.

Who knows, your homewaters could be next!



A HISTORY OF SALMONID MANAGEMENT IN THE COLUMBIA RIVER

THE DIVERGENT IDEAS OF SPENCER BAIRD & WILLIS RICH

WORDS BY
Bill Bakke,
Founder & Science and Conservation Director

(LEFT)
Willis Rich, the father of "Home Stream Theory"

(RIGHT)
Spencer Baird, U.S. Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries

Anyone who wishes to better understand the present day challenges facing wild, native fish in the Northwest would benefit from learning the historical context of salmon management in the Columbia River since 1850. Prevailing beliefs, facts and dollars have all played a decisive role in the current status of the Columbia's wild salmon and steelhead.

As we follow the timeline to the present, there is a branch that describes a divergent perspective about salmon and management – one that holds promise for restoring our relationship with the Columbia and its wild, native fish. So, let's start walking down that line.

1875: Spencer Baird, U.S. Fish Commissioner, told *The Oregonian* that by investing in hatcheries it would no longer be necessary to regulate harvest and protect habitat. He did not have any proof to support that conclusion but he did believe that states would not effectively manage wild salmon, based on his experience on the East Coast with Atlantic salmon. Baird's plan was favored because it let the government and politicians off the hook for limiting fisheries and hydropower development. However, Baird's plan required money to fund hatcheries. A fiscal solution emerged as taxpayers funded hatchery programs in an agreement to make up for overfishing and damaging salmon habitat.

1878: At Baird's request, Livingston Stone came to the Clackamas River and developed the first salmon hatchery on the Columbia because salmon runs had declined. Stone advocated that salmon were not locally adapted, but returned to rivers randomly, primarily to those rivers with a vigorous, rapid flow.

1902: David Starr Jordan (Stanford University) and B.W. Everman (U.S. Fish Commission) were influential thinkers and experts on salmon. They said, "We fail to find any evidence that salmon return to spawn on the same spawning grounds…"

As a result of these conclusions, Northwesterners believed that salmon did not return to their rivers of birth and that hatcheries could effectively and efficiently replace wild salmon and their habitats. These beliefs had a profound effect on the development of a salmon management framework that is still operating today.

1917: John Cobb, soon to become the head of fisheries at the University of Washington wrote: "In some sections an almost idolatrous faith in the efficacy of artificial culture of fish for replenishing the ravages of man…and nothing has done more harm than the prevalence of such an idea."

1927: Willis Rich concluded, based on his salmon tagging work, "Since each race is self-propagating, it becomes perfectly apparent that all parts of the salmon run must be given protection if the run as a whole is to be maintained."

"...it is essential that each independent, self-perpetuating population of fish be preserved if depletion is to be avoided."

Willis H. Rich, 1948

"...instead of the passage of protective laws, which cannot be enforced except at very great expense and with much ill feeling, measures be taken...for the immediate establishment of a hatching establishment on the Columbia River, and the initiation during the present year of the method of artificial hatching of these fish."

Spencer Baird, Salmon Fisheries in Oregon, *The Oregonian* (Portland), March 3, 1875

1948: Willis Rich recommended, "The importance of the fact that the salmon and steelhead return as adults to their home streams and tributaries is obvious; it is essential that each independent, self-perpetuating population of fish be preserved if depletion is to be avoided."

The beliefs of Baird, Stone and Jordan were challenged by scientific investigation. Willis Rich established the concept of the Home Stream Theory as the management approach necessary to conserve wild salmon and maintain fisheries. The concept of salmon management in place for 73 years diverged based on new scientific facts. There are now two perspectives on salmon management: 1) Conservation based on the home stream theory and 2) Privatizing the public commons to produce a product for the market economy. Which perspective will win?

The divergent perspective of Rich led to Oregon's Wild Fish Management Policy in 1978, the Endangered Species Act protections for the Columbia's wild salmon in 1991, and the 1996 review of Northwest salmon management by the National Research Council in the book *Upstream*.

In discussing hatcheries the National Research Council said, "Hatcheries have resulted…in reduced genetic diversity within and between salmon populations, increased the effect of mixed-population fisheries on depleted natural populations, altered behavior of fish, caused ecological problems by eliminating the nutritive contributions of carcasses of spawning salmon from streams, and probably displaced the remnants of wild runs."

1947: The U.S. Department of Interior said, "The Northwest and the Department Committees have each assumed that the Columbia River fisheries cannot be allowed indefinitely to block the full development of the other resources of the river. It is, therefore, the conclusion of all concerned that the overall benefits to the Pacific Northwest from a thorough going development of the Snake and Columbia are such that the present salmon run must be sacrificed. This means that the Department's efforts should be directed toward ameliorating the impact of this development upon injured interests and not toward a vain attempt to hold still the hands of the clock."

Hatchery mitigation eclipsed the Home Stream Theory based conservation recommendations of Willis Rich. Rocky Reach Dam (1933) was already in operation on the upper Columbia soon to be followed by Bonneville Dam (1938) and Grand Coulee Dam (1941).

Spencer Baird was correct in his belief that state and federal governments were unwilling to regulate hydropower development and overfishing. Therefore, Baird's promise of hatchery programs to maintain salmon runs would become the dominant perspective.

1938: The Mitchell Act was passed and became the primary source of federal funding for hatchery development in the Columbia basin.

1960: Milo Moore, Director of the Washington Department of Fisheries, said: "…artificial taking of spawn may provide the reality – salmon without rivers."

1980: The Power Planning Council was established by Congress and through its fish and wildlife program with Bonneville Power Administration initiated $15 billion worth of salmon passage, habitat and hatcheries projects. Despite this investment, their efforts have failed to achieve their goal of producing 5 million hatchery, natural (naturally spawning hatchery fish) and wild fish in the Columbia River.

1991: The first wild salmon populations were given protection through the Endangered Species Act.

The hatchery promise to provide harvest mitigation for Columbia River fisheries has yet to materialize and recovery of wild salmon through the authority of the Endangered Species Act has not yet been effectively applied, and the conservation recommendations of Willis Rich have been set aside; a footnote in history. As Native Fish Society looks to the future, among our primary goals is ensuring that Rich's recommendations don't continue to lay fallow.

To learn more about the history and ideas driving the wild salmon crisis in the Columbia River, read Jim Lichatowich's book, *Salmon Without Rivers*.

DOUG ROBERTSON

1947-2016

WORDS BY
Mark Sherwood,
Communications
Director

(ABOVE)
Doug's legacy:
the Lower
Deschutes River
Wildlife Area

PHOTO:
Tyson Gillard

(CENTER)
Doug Robertson
with a wild
Deschutes
summer
steelhead

Six years ago I met Doug Robertson at a Native Fish Society board meeting. In a small room of strangers, Doug's warmth and laughter drew me in immediately. He wanted to talk about trout fishing: Had I figured out the Deschutes yet? Experienced the salmonfly hatch? Landed a summer steelhead? Not yet, I said. Well let me draw you a map Doug offered, sketching out a few likely steelhead runs just a few miles up from the mouth, his eyes dancing as he recounted stories of fish hooked, landed and lost. Doug's love for the Deschutes was legendary and infectious.

Later, I learned the full extent of Doug's affection for the Deschutes. During the early 1980s, Doug played a central role in the transfer of 12 miles of land on both sides of the lower Deschutes from private to public ownership. For a tenuous year, Doug kept thousands of acres for sale by the Eastern Oregon Land Company out of the hands of private resort developers, while Governor Atiyeh, the Oregon Wildlife Heritage Foundation, Oregon State Parks and hundreds of businesses and individual donors raised the funds necessary for the state to purchase the lands.

Doug's vision for the lower Deschutes was a bold one and it captured the entire state's attention. In 1985, the deal came together and the state's acquisition formed the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Area -- an area open to the public and managed for the benefit of recreation, native fish, and wildlife. Doug's love for the Deschutes changed the map and altered the course of the river's history.

Today where cattle once overgrazed, the banks of the lower Deschutes are lush with native vegetation. Anglers, hikers and bikers rise before dawn and follow the public trail upstream into the lower canyon in pursuit of the Deschutes' famous wild summer steelhead. On Robertson Point, just west of Harris Canyon, you can find a monument to Doug, Nan and their daughter Lauren. If you find yourself there, don't forget to say thank you to Doug, a man who loved the river and found so many ways to share it with others.

During his decade long tenure on Native Fish Society's board of directors, Doug's thoughtful and pragmatic approach helped our organization successfully navigate challenging times. Perpetually fueled by his passion for native fish, Doug continued his involvement on the board right up until his final months. Native Fish Society's board members and staff will greatly miss Doug and we wish our sincerest condolences to his wife Nan Robertson and all of Doug's family and friends.

Per Doug's request, we invite you to go spend a day on a river in his honor. If it's the Deschutes, even better. Donations in Doug's name can be sent to the Native Fish Society.

A STEWARD'S JOURNEY

WORDS BY
Conrad Gowell,
River Steward
Program Director

(ABOVE)
Fisheye view

PHOTO:
Jake Crawford

"You can learn everything you need to know on the river," Ben, the man who may as well have been my grandfather, once told me. Biology, geology, climate change, political science, self-reliance, how to build fire despite (perhaps because of) the rain; pick any lesson you want and I'll draw you my connections to water.

Two stream-keepers introduced me to a river I fell in love with when I was twelve. (I'd been looking since I was six. I know because the story of my asking Santa, sitting on his lap, for a river is part of our family lore.) From that point I explored, observed, wondered, and wandered. I shared headwater tributaries with pairs of spawning salmon, encountered black bears, and watched curious kingfishers in ancient cloud forests. I experienced the unfurling of life, and the feeling that comes from holding a place's breath in your lungs.

From there, I gathered a frame of reference and found an important question: "How can we inspire others to conserve wild fish, and watersheds for future generations?" As an adolescent I'd heard campfire stories of fish long since gone from their former habitats: Spring Chinook, Bull Trout, Coho Salmon. I wondered what those places must have been like with these fish—I felt their absence.

Near the end of my high school career, I felt another sense of loss as Ben's health failed. On March 6, 2005, when he died, his son bestowed upon me the title of co-streamkeeper. I came of age then, when the river needed another advocate, and carried on the tradition of care.

Since then, my life has followed the contours of water. In Alaskan post-glacial lakes I learned how to run a remote field research camp, how high quality data influences fisheries management, and the significant role geography, culture, economics, and other complex factors play in science. Later, tropical flats and coral reefs taught me the importance of creating and mapping marine reserves. I developed an affinity for the underwater world, and realized how differently one sees marine ecosystems through a mask and snorkel. Here in the Pacific Northwest I have worked as an applied conservation ecologist, conceiving, designing, funding, implementing, and monitoring watershed restoration, often with indigenous cultures, reaching to restore our collective watersheds.

I first became involved with the Native Fish Society when I connected with another local advocate who shared my interest in the Siletz watershed. We bonded on the river and hatched plans to ensure long-term

(BELOW)
Conrad among giants

PHOTO:
Conrad Gowell

conservation of the area and ended up co-stewards. We've been friends and River Stewards ever since. It was comforting to know a kindred spirit also kept watch, and that I belong to a community interested and concerned and active with members both similar to and different from myself. I felt connected with and inspired by people who shared my passion.

After serving as a River Steward—attending policy meetings, forming relationships with partners, learning the management framework, organizing local gatherings—I was asked to become a coordinator for stewards on the Oregon Coast. While I'd had successes in my watershed such as organizing snorkel surveys, and mobilizing opposition to hatchery programs, the challenges for the larger sphere of influence were formidable. In that role, I realized that there were others who had the same place-based knowledge, and that by combining our efforts we could grow a grassroots movement.

My story has transformed from aspiring scientist to applied conservation biologist to full time advocate for clean water and wild fish. How we live today has an impact on what is to come. In everyone is the capacity to alter the trajectory of our landscapes. Think about what it means to be a River Steward in a broader, grander fashion, and foster all-inclusive participation.

Join us, become a River Steward. We can inspire people to advance the recovery of wild fish and conserve watersheds for the future.

Conrad joined the Native Fish Society family as the River Steward Program Director this past April after serving as a regional coordinator since 2013 and as a Siletz River Steward since 2010. To learn more about the River Steward Program head to our new website at nativefishsociety.org/river-stewards.

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(PREVIOUS) Horatio in the rain PHOTO: Jeff Hickman

FOR THE LOVE OF WILD NATIVE FISH

What many people don't realize is that by and large, America's most significant conservation victories start with a small group of concerned locals determined to make a difference.

That's why Native Fish Society's River Steward Program exists: to empower, inspire and grow a regionwide network of local grassroots advocates dedicated to science-based solutions for their Northwest homewaters and wild native fish.

Does your life revolve around a local river and/or native fish population? Do you want to learn how to become its advocate?

Get in touch with us to learn more.

RIVER STEWARDS + DISTRICT COORDINATORS

DISTRICT COORDINATORS

Peter Donahower, Mid-Columbia
Paul Engelmeyer, Mid-Oregon Coast
Jason Small, Puget Sound

RIVER STEWARDS

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Ryan Allred, Klamath
Rachel Andras, Bear Creek Tributaries
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Ian Fergusson, Salmonberry
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