



Strong Runs

Wild is the Future

Newsletter of the Native Fish Society

Fall 2008

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Home Waters

Land use cripples the Salmonberry

Slides due to timber harvest and railroad construction likely decimated two or more year classes of Salmonberry salmon and steelhead

by **Joyce Sherman**
NFS Salmonberry Steward

Northwest Oregon is unique country, a landscape of very steep slopes covered with loose soils that receives plentiful precipitation. This special place has the ability to grow giant trees and offers the best hope of recovering anadromous fish. Rivers are shorter than within the Columbia system, and less population density means less urbanization (paved areas, rooftops and removal of riparian growth).

Northwest Oregon streams still host some healthy runs of steelhead and salmon. Up until 1933, timber harvest was done selectively with emphasis on old growth spruce trees used to build airplanes.

In 1933 the first of four “Tillamook Burn” fires swept across the landscape. The 1933 fire was followed by three additional fires at six-year intervals. Salvage logging lasted for well over a decade, not only to salvage burned trees before they began to rot and lose value, but due to the war effort.



Photo by Ian Fergusson

This photo was taken a month after the December flood; the river was still very high and muddy. This is a section of railroad immediately below the Red Clay Sale, a large clear cut immediately above the railroad right-of-way. First small slides below this cut occurred during the winter of 2006-07; during the 2007 flood, the rail was either buried or pushed into the river for close to a mile below the sale area.

In 1939, a law was passed to make it possible for the state to replant the burned area. The counties ceded lands to the state; in return they were promised a substantial share of revenues when trees became large enough to harvest. Following World War II, thousands



Photo by Ian Fergusson

This photo is of the headwaters of Wolf Creek, a Salmonberry tributary. Debris avalanches here were caused by timber harvest.

Photo by Russell Bassett

On the cover: Native Fish Society member Frank Moore fishes for summer steelhead on the North Umpqua this October. For more information on the North Umpqua see page 8.

of volunteers planted seedlings, and helicopters were used for aerial seeding, the first time copters were used in forestry. The forest re-grew as a monoculture forest: all Douglas fir of approximately the same age.

By 1990, the Oregon Department of Forestry had begun to thin the growing trees. The initial thins were done carefully, some with helicopters, but subsequent larger thins of a greater percentage of trees resulted in loss of most undergrowth. Some of these thins

looked almost like clear cuts with “leave” trees. By the mid 1990s, ODF and private landowners began to clear cut areas of up to 120 acres. Some of these clearcuts bordered other clearcuts with a narrow band of standing trees between them.

As harvest increased, landslides, now called “debris avalanches,” began to be a problem. They started within cuts, immediately below cuts, and where old legacy roads and new roads failed. There was some damage during the 1992 flood, much more during the 1996 flood, and total destruction of some rivers during the December '07 flood.

One way to measure the damage is to look at costs to repair or rebuild the railroad that runs along the Salmonberry River in a steep canyon. In 1992, costs were approximately \$2 million; in 1996, \$16 million; and in 2007, an estimated \$57.3 million. In December 2007 debris avalanches roared down every Salmonberry tributary except one, and each tributary added to the load of debris carried by the river, tearing out the railroad and the Spruce Run Road bridge.

Damage in 1996 was substantial. It was impossible to locate one earlier macroinvertebrate collection site, as all the trees bordering the river had been torn away. Long stretches of the river were channelized. At first, there was heavy equipment in the river while steelhead attempted to spawn, but we encouraged ODFW to require that the equipment not be allowed to work instream while fish were spawning. Even so, all of the Chinook from the previous fall's spawning were lost — but winter steelhead juveniles were large enough to survive, and the few eggs that survived that spring had better than usual fry survival, so winter steelhead came through amazingly well.

The 2007 flood has proven to be even more catastrophic. The lack of fish-eating birds last spring was proof that there were few juveniles in the river. Almost the entire river was cut down to bedrock in a straight channel, with gravel piled shoulder-high along the sides, so there was very little spawning in the main stem.

Because the 12-foot waterfall on the North Fork was filled in with debris, more fish than usual were able to move up the North Fork, but redd counts there were far below normal. We believe that two year classes of Salmonberry salmon and steelhead have been lost, and we fear that other North Coast streams fared no better.



Photo by Joyce Sherman

Today, the river is a fairly straight sluice for much of its length, cut down to bedrock with gravel piled up along each side. Remains of rail visible at left of photo.

One or more additional year classes may well be lost due to lack of spawning habitat in 2009 and beyond. Left to her own devices, Mother Nature can accomplish amazing rehabilitation, but we've handed her an almost insurmountable task this time.

Rebuilding the railroad would only cause additional damage to Salmonberry fish, and we hope that economic considerations alone will prevent this from happening. The \$2.6 million feasibility study results are due

in December; at that time FEMA will decide whether or not to offer to pay 75% of the estimated \$57.3 million total. Because the Port has never shown a profit on the railroad and they still owe for their share of 1996 reconstruction, the state would have to provide the 25% match, a tall order when state agencies have been asked to prepare for deep cuts in their budgets.

Even if the railroad is not rebuilt and if harvest were to stop today, there would still be debris avalanches from past harvest activities during high water events for the next few years. If harvest continues at its present rate, we believe that all North Coast anadromous fish are threatened with extinction. If the Board of Forestry decides to allow a 35% increase over current harvest levels, the future of North Coast fish could be measured in single-digit years.

ODF has never admitted that timber harvest plays a role in debris avalanches. Following the 1996 flood, various agency managers and biologists stated that some of the damage to the Port's railroad was “definitely” due to timber harvest, past or present. Satisfied with this common opinion, we did not follow debris avalanches up tributaries to their sources as we should have. During 2007, Ian Fergusson single-handedly made numerous difficult cross-country hikes to determine the source of slides on Bathtub Creek and Wolf Creek. (To get a copy of his report plus our reports about the railroad, please contact rivergraphics@spiritone.com.)

It's past time for ODF to own up to the true costs of timber harvest. In the Salmonberry drainage alone, the tab is almost \$60 million for the railroad, plus an unknown sum for the Spruce Run Road bridge, plus the cost to eventually rebuild miles of forest roads destroyed. The cost of damage to fish runs is also substantial, but its hard for fish to be measured in dollars. Sport fishing does yield income to coastal residents — just think about the fall Chinook fishery in Tillamook Bay, where you can almost walk across the bay going from boat to boat. What economic loss will there be if that fishery is eliminated due to debris avalanches that wipe out fall Chinook runs?

We urge you to be alert to the next Board of Forestry meeting in early January. Following the Nov. 6 meeting, members of the board directed the staff to prepare a report about how harvest can be increased without harming fish, and that could be a topic for the early January meeting.

A river unites them

NFS helps form Molalla River Alliance

by **Russell Bassett**
NFS River Steward Coordinator

Just a couple years back, the local newspaper in Molalla, Ore., printed a series of articles with the ostentatious title “A River Divides Them.” The articles concerned the battle between the city and concerned local citizens, led by the Native Fish Society’s Molalla River Stewards, over the city’s plan to discharge treated wastewater into the river. It truly was a dividing issue, with both sides lawyering-up, nasty public meetings, expensive campaigns, and finally, a deciding vote and settlement.

Even though the city was allowed to dump its treated wastewater in the river, thanks to the efforts of NFS and others, they were also forced to provide \$110,000 for fish enhancement projects on the river.

Thankfully those contentious days are over, and while there may be a few hurt feelings left, the river no longer divides, it unites.

I can’t tell you how good it was to come back from Iraq and see the same people I saw fighting tooth and nail, working together for the common good of the river and community. In Iraq, I saw way, way too much hate. Hate that lasts generations, that lasts centuries. Trying to get people to put that hate aside for the common good is the toughest challenge we still face over there ... but that’s another story.

This story is about the river. It’s a story of the river that has the same name as the town and the same name as the school district: the Molalla River, that golden jewel less than an hour’s drive from downtown Portland.

Alleviation of Social Problems

The biggest news affecting the Molalla River and Molalla River Recreation Corridor is the formation of the Molalla River Alliance, a diverse group of agencies, organizations, businesses and individuals who have set their differences aside to work for the common good. The Native Fish Society’s



Photo by Russell Bassett

From left: Weyerhaeuser Area Engineer Mary Castle and Native Fish Society Molalla River Stewards Tom Derry and Mark Schmidt examine a map to determine where fish-barrier culverts are in the upper reaches of Trout Creek Nov. 11. Weyerhaeuser and the Native Fish Society are working together to restore fish passage at Cedar Creek and Trout Creek in 2009.

Molalla River Stewards were instrumental in forming the Alliance, and NFS shares office space, staff and expenses with the Alliance.

Only a year old, the Alliance has made tremendous strides with alleviating some of the social problems that have plagued the Corridor for decades. The Alliance was the impetus for a much-needed vast increase of law-enforcement presence in the Corridor. Starting this summer, the city of Molalla began regular patrols of the Corridor, and Clackamas County, State Police and BLM Rangers also increased their presence.

“Crime in the Corridor has been slashed dramatically,” explained Mike Moody, MRA president. “Everyone that lives next to there says it is a fraction of what it used to be.”

“We have seen a significant reduction in crime, vandalism, dumping, poaching and other anti-social behavior,” agreed John Atkins, Molalla city manager.

Just as increased law enforcement was

a major factor in reducing crime, so was BLM’s caretaker program in reducing litter. This summer, two caretaker couples worked the Corridor, daily picking up trash and cleaning up camp sites. Litter, which used to mar the Corridor enough for it to be a black spot on the community’s reputation, is much reduced.

While there have been marked improvements (and two more that haven’t been mentioned are less vagrancy and a reduction in abandoned vehicles), it’s way too soon to break out the champagne and start patting each other on the back. Problems still exist. Vandalism and thievery remain acute problems, as the vast majority of new signs in the Corridor have all been shot up, and Weyerhaeuser had four of their vehicles stripped this year, including two fire trucks.

“There have been other years where there has been some petty stuff, but this is the worst year as far as a dollar amount,” explained Mary Castle, Weyerhaeuser



Photo by Russell Bassett

This spawned-out spring Chinook salmon was one of only 22 discovered during the Native Fish Society's 2008 Molalla River Spring Chinook Spawning Survey. Recovery of spring Chinook is a high priority for several organizations and agencies involved with the river.

Clackamas Tree Farm engineer, noting that the thieves caused \$20,000 worth of damage.

Littering also remains a problem, as Molalla RiverWatch's October cleanup event removed two tons of garbage from the Corridor. While this was a ton less than last year at the same time, it's still way too much. Two Native Fish Society staff members are on the Molalla RiverWatch's Board of Directors and RiverWatch's president is an NFS member.

Another issue is that the lowlifes seem to be moving farther into the Corridor to avoid law enforcement, as evidenced by the many broken gates, cut locks and stripped vehicles on Weyerhaeuser land and the amount of trash found dumped high on Horse Creek.

"We are not to the place that we want to get to yet, but we are certainly making progress," said Atkins. "In time, the word will get around that this is not a place to go to dump trash, rip up the stream side and have drinking parties. We will see over-time that we are going to create the natural and social environment that we are all working toward."

Increased law enforcement is also helping to conserve and restore the river's native fish populations.

"Law enforcement is helping to stop poaching and streamside impacts, and the Alliance's support helped us during the angling regulation change process," said Tom Derry, NFS Molalla River Steward, noting that the Molalla proposal was one of only a handful of conservation measures passed by the ODFW Commission

Recreation Plan

Many local groups, including NFS, have been pushing BLM to create a recreation plan for the Corridor for years, and the good news is they are now getting around to doing it.

"We have been working to help the BLM create a recreation management plan for the Corridor and will continue to work with BLM as they develop the plan," said Atkins, who is also the Outreach Committee Chair for MRA. "We've proposed a family campground in the Corridor to restrict streamside camping and direct it to a family campground that will have facilities, which will get us away from the dumping and vandalism we have seen along the years."

Atkins also noted that they have seen an increase of 33 percent more people in the Corridor this summer, for a record number of visitors.

"The recreation plan could move the dispersed campsites off the river to one or two campgrounds to recover riparian habitat," Derry said.

How the plan will look remains to be seen, but BLM has been great about seeking public input, and hopefully the Corridor will have improved facilities, campgrounds and trails in the years to come.

Fish Enhancement

A lot of effort is currently being put into restoring fish populations on the Molalla River. Winter steelhead runs on the Molalla,

which a decade ago were almost completely decimated, have steadily increased each year. This year an estimate 1,500 steelhead returned to the river to spawn. For those anglers hardy enough to brave the cold and wet conditions, January-March provide an excellent catch-and-release fishery.

Spring Chinook, the other native anadromous fish to the river, is struggling. The Native Fish Society's spawning survey discovered only 22 fish and 19 redds this September, indicating that there were less than 100 fish that successfully spawned in the river.

The Chinook run was so bad, that fishermen pretty much abandoned the river this spring, despite the fact that it was the only river in the whole Willamette system that was open to spring Chinook fishing.

Coho, which are non-native to the entire upper Willamette, are successfully propagating from a discontinued stocking program. So far this year, there have been almost 4,000 Coho over Willamette Falls, and we know some of those fish are returning to the Molalla, exactly how many is unknown. We did receive one report earlier this month from a person who was canoeing near the mouth who saw so many fish that he was hitting them with his paddle.

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Photo by Russell Bassett

Members of the Native Fish Society, Bureau of Land Management and Molalla RiverWatch, all of which are members of the Molalla River Alliance, inspect the bridge at Russell Creek this summer. A joint project between Weyerhaeuser removed a fish barrier culvert and replaced it with the bridge three years ago.

Sustainable salmon issues

by **Bill Bakke**
NFS Executive Director

Introduction

Salmon and steelhead are locally adapted to their home streams for reproduction and rearing of their young. Consequently, salmonids have diverse genetic and life history attributes that allows them to cope successfully with a constantly changing environment.

It is not easy to defeat wild salmonids, yet over the last 150 years we have been remarkably successful. The number of distinct locally adapted wild populations now listed for protection under the Endangered Species Act should be a warning to the State of Oregon that our management policy and programs are in need of review and change.

The issues outlined below relate to the authority of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and the inability to effectively secure a successful conservation program for Oregon salmonids. By itself, the ODFW cannot solve all the salmon problems. This agency relies upon other state and federal water and land management agencies to provide the habitat conditions needed for sustainable salmon runs.

The ODFW has authority over fish production and allocation among competing user groups. In simple terms, it is invested in hatchery production and harvest management. The agency has the responsibility under state law to “prevent the serious depletion of indigenous (native) species” through its policy and management authority. The problem, which is confirmed by numerous ESA-listings, is the agency has not developed a comprehensive salmon conservation policy.

State agency policy affecting salmon habitat is also failing to secure the productive capacity for Oregon salmon watersheds. Taken together, fish management and habitat management policy is defeating the salmon. Even though the Oregon Legislature has an established mandate to protect native wild salmon, the ODFW has failed to comply with that mandate and other state agencies responsible for healthy salmon watersheds are not helping.

Hatchery Impacts

We know from years of scientific research that hatcheries using

wild brood stock produce salmonids that survive better than old hatchery stock. Even though this is true, it has also been shown that hatchery fish from wild brood stock have a 20% lower survival rate than wild fish in their first generation of hatchery culture. In the second generation their survival rate is 40% less than wild salmon.

Hatcheries cannot replace or recover wild salmonids. Hatcheries can produce adults for harvest but they cannot increase productivity of wild salmon. There is evidence that when hatchery fish spawn naturally with wild salmon natural production declines. Hatchery salmon contribute to the decline of wild salmon. Hatcheries are dependent upon wild salmon as a seed source so we need healthy wild salmon runs to improve hatchery cost effectiveness and improve benefits to the public.

Action: The policy and management issue is to maintain the biological integrity of our wild salmon and steelhead by controlling how hatcheries are used to secure healthy wild populations while providing economically viable hatchery programs. Each salmon and steelhead hatchery program should be based on measurable objectives and evaluated. In addition, a risk assessment of each hatchery program on wild salmonids is necessary.

The cost of hatchery fish

Even though Oregon and other Northwest states spend millions of dollars of public funds to produce hatchery fish, there are few eval-

uations of the cost to produce a fish for harvest

The Independent Economic Advisory Board (IEAB) for the Power Planning and Conservation Council completed Phase I of their hatchery cost evaluation in 2002. They found that hatchery fish ranged in cost depending on the species and location of the hatchery, but costs per adult caught ranged from \$55 to over \$200,000 per fish harvested. For example the cost to catch for Irrigon Hatchery steelhead is \$453 per fish. Phase II of the IEAB hatchery cost evaluation was not approved by the Council and a complete evaluation of all hatcheries was never completed.

Action: A thorough evaluation of hatchery costs including the cost to catch should be completed for hatcheries operated by the ODFW. This evaluation should be done by independent economists. A cost evaluation is needed to determine the return for the investment in Oregon operated hatcheries.



Photo by Russell Bassett

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New home, new staff: NFS moves to Molalla

by **Russell Bassett**
NFS River Steward Coordinator

Several major changes have taken place at the Native Fish Society. The administration office has moved out of Portland. With lots of elbow-grease, paint and donations from members and friends, we now have a professional new office located in Molalla, Ore. Not only is NFS staff enjoying the new office, but we are also saving our member's conservation dollars by operating out of a smaller shared space. Three other non-profit organizations share the office space, so rent and bills have been reduced.

The new office is a blessing to the three NFS staff who live in Molalla and now no-longer have to commute to Portland on a daily basis. Development Director Tom Derry, River Steward Coordinator Russell Bassett and new Administrative Assistant Fran Taylor work out of the new office, which is shared with staff from the Molalla River Alliance, Molalla RiverWatch and Friends of Family Farmers.

"The Molalla office reduces our carbon footprint, as staff no-longer have an hour commute," said NFS Executive Director Bill Bakke. "It also makes our staff more effective because they don't have to spend so much time in transit. We now have three staff working for the Native Fish Society all in one office so we are doing a better job of coordinating and collaborating on issues important to the organization. We are more efficient and cost effective, so it's really a win, win."

Bakke still works out of his office in Portland, and while there is now more physical distance between the boss and staff, that hasn't been a barrier to effective communication.

"There's really no challenges," Bakke said. "Having the admin office in Molalla works fine. That's why we have electronic devices at our disposal. We are in regular communication, and things are cooking along as usual."

The new contact information for the Native Fish Society is:

PO Box 568
103 S. Molalla Ave.
Molalla, OR 97038
Phone: 503-829-6202
Fax: 503-829-6204
E-mail: info@nativefishsociety.org



Photo by Russell Bassett

New NFS Administrative Assistant Fran Taylor enjoys Halloween in front of the new Molalla office Oct. 31. NFS staff members handed out candy to trick-or-treaters for Halloween. NFS shares the office with three other non-profits, reducing operating costs.

Please update your mailing and contact lists!

Another big change that has recently happened at the Native Fish Society is that Fran Taylor has replaced Tim Manion as the administrative assistant. Fran was raised in The Dalles, Ore., and graduated from Willamette University. She taught elementary school for more than 30 years, most of that time in Canby, Ore.

Fran has been very active in protecting the Molalla River. She helped lead the group of concerned citizens who tried to force the city of Molalla to keep from discharging treated wastewater in the river, she was instrumental in the formation of the Molalla River Alliance, and has been actively involved in the fights to stop proposed gravel mines near the river.

"Fran's a natural fit for this position," said Bakke. "She's very personable and organized, and she brings a wealth of grass-roots-

organizing knowledge to the position."

The administration position has been cut to part time in order to save money, but without being asked to do so, Fran (who gets no extra money from working overtime) has been putting in long hours to ensure mission success.

"I am excited to be part of the fabulous staff at NFS and to work toward our common goal of recovering native fish," Fran said.

Fran can be reached at 503-829-6202 or fran@molalla.net.



Photo by Russell Bassett

NFS Executive Director Bill Bakke (right) and Development Director Tom Derry explore the new Molalla office during its open house Aug. 21. More than 100 members of the Molalla and Portland conservation communities attended the event.

NFS Members: Enlighten



Top: New NFS member and Wild Salmon Center employee Erica Stock fishes the Molalla River this summer.



Left: NFS members and business consultants Ray Loen and Rick Pay float the Deschutes River with Deschutes Angler guide Evan Unti during the NFS Steelhead event in November.



Top: NFS member and professional photographer Ken Anderson floats the Deschutes in September.



Right: NFS member and U.S. Forest Service fisheries biologist Dan Shively points out a Molalla River spring Chinook spawning redd to NFS River Steward Mark Schmidt in September.

tened, Informed and Fun



Right: NFS Member and business owner Richard Cassar attempts to land a Kispiox River steelhead in British Columbia this October.

Left: New NFS member and student Ian Ricketson poses for a photo with Skeena system steelhead before releasing it in October.



NFS River Steward Paul Engelmeyer explains marine sanctuaries on the Oregon Coast to fellow Stewards (from left) Tom Davis, Bill Bakke, Rob Sims, Tom Derry, Peter Tronquet and Rob Bowler during the 2008 River Steward Retreat in August.

Photos by Russell Bassett



Steward Report

Focus on the North Umpqua

by **Rob Bowler**, NFS N. Umpqua Steward
and
Russell Bassett, NFS River Steward Coordinator

Overview of N. Umpqua native fish

The **summer steelhead** run has averaged 8,494 fish in the past 10 years. In the past five years, the wild fish have comprised an average of 50-60 percent of the run. This year the summer count over Winchester Dam will be about 6,000 - 6,500 fish. This is about 2,000 below the 10-year average and about 67.5 percent are wild. The linear average of wild fish shows a slight increase of fish since counts began at Winchester Dam in 1946. Hatchery release goals for summer steelhead in the river are 110,000 smolts from a broodstock program at Rock Creek Hatchery. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife often does not meet that goal, however, and last year they released only 20,000 due to disease at the hatchery. Hatchery smolts are no longer planted above Rock Creek in the fly water - all are planted below Rock Creek. Hatchery smolts used to be dumped in at the gravel bin and possibly higher, well above Steamboat Creek about 19 miles up river from Rock Creek. ODFW has done telemetry work with hatchery fish and some do go above Rock Creek, but seem to drop back to the Rock Creek area in the fall and early winter. This summer, fly anglers were complaining about not catching many fish. Counts in the Big Bend pools at Steamboat Creek were almost entirely wild (600 summers) and only three hatchery. Summer wild fish numbers are well below historical levels (11,000 wild fish, 1926 Lee Spencer Study). Action: ODFW should continue to plant hatchery smolts below Rock Creek. Monitor catch and release for all wild summers.

The **winter steelhead** run has averaged 8,745 fish in the past 10 years, of which the vast majority are wild, although there are some hatchery strays. The stray rate into North Umpqua from the South Umpqua hatchery program is 15-20 percent (600 - 1,200) fish. The linear average of wild fish shows a small decrease since counts

began at Winchester Dam in 1946. There are currently no hatchery releases of winter steelhead on the North Umpqua; however, the district biologist, Laura Jackson, is pushing to start a program of 60,000 smolts which would come from a broodstock program at Rock Creek Hatchery. Action: Monitor catch and release for all winters. Be vigilant about proposed winter hatchery program on the North Umpqua, and if need be, initiate major campaign to prevent it.

The **spring Chinook** run has averaged 13,618 fish in the past 10 years. Hatchery release goals for spring Chinook are 350,000 smolts from a broodstock program at Rock Creek Hatchery. This year the count was 7,387 over Winchester Dam, of which 67.6 percent were hatchery. Counts are well below ten-year averages. Action: Monitor counts.

The **fall Chinook** run has averaged 202 fish in the past 10 years over Winchester Dam. There is currently no hatchery program for fall Chinook on the N. Umpqua, but there is one on the South Umpqua and they spawn in the main stem and South Umpqua with the total run averaging between 5,000-6000 fish. The South Umpqua fishery closed during spawning season to protect spawners both spring and fall. Action: Monitor numbers.

The **Coho** run has averaged 12,082 fish in the past 10 years, but the stocking program for Coho on the N. Umpqua ended in 2005, and the run has dropped off considerably and should be between 1,500-3,000 fish. The South Umpqua Coho hatchery program stocks the S. Umpqua with 60,000 Coho smolts. Action: Monitor hatchery strays into the North Umpqua.

The **sea-run cutthroat** population is severely degraded, averaging less than 100 fish in the last 10 years. Action: Continue to monitor numbers

Issues, Concerns, Successes

The fly water area above Rock Creek on the North Umpqua is in pretty good shape when compared with other rivers. The steel-

head and salmon runs while certainly not at historic levels remain relatively stable, although the spring Chinook run has decreased rapidly in the last couple years, which is consistent with the rest of the Pacific Coast. Most of the riparian area in the fly water is protected from land use issues by the U.S. Department of Forestry. Forest Service mitigation efforts started in 1981. About \$1.5 million is spent each year in Steamboat Creek and its tributaries, including removal of culverts, riparian planting, thinning, road decommissioning and woody material placement. Most outside money comes from PacifiCorp mitigation fund and the Forest Service has complete discretion how it is spent. Forest Service controls the entire Steamboat watershed and their approach is comprehensive. Work has gone on for 20 years, with an expenditure of about \$25 million. Work is nearly complete which should benefit summer and winter steelhead. There is an encouraging up swing on summer wild fish!

BLM still owns some of the land in the lower fly water and their Western Oregon Plan Revision would likely negatively impact N. Umpqua streams. BLM's approach is not as comprehensive as the Forest Service's, as road removal is not usually an option because of a mix of private lands. BLM has a tendency to adversely affect habitat and then promise restoration. Action: Try to determine if any restoration projects are comprehensive enough to be worthwhile and not just band-aids. Write a letter to Governor Kulongoski and ask him to reject latest WOPR version.

Much of the prime rearing habitat is closed to angling, and while poaching is still a concern, Lee Spencer and the Fish Watch program have helped with this problem tremendously. Action: Urge State Police to monitor poaching at mouths of cold water creeks where steelhead seek refuge. Continue to support Lee Spencer.

The lower part of the N. Umpqua, the main stem of the Umpqua and the S. Umpqua have more issues with land use, as water withdraws due to agriculture and urbanization have created serious temperature issues. Timber harvest practices are also a serious problem in this area. One of the major problems facing summers is warm temperatures (thermal barriers) in mid and lower reaches of the N. Umpqua, main-stem Umpqua and S. Umpqua. Action: Support minimum flow standards.

While the N. Umpqua steelhead runs remain around 50-90 percent wild, the S. Umpqua is another story, with the majority of the runs comprised of stocked fish. Stocking goals for the S. Umpqua are 60,000 Coho, 120,000 winter steelhead and 70,000 fall Chinook. ODFW is looking to increase Coho stocking on the South Umpqua

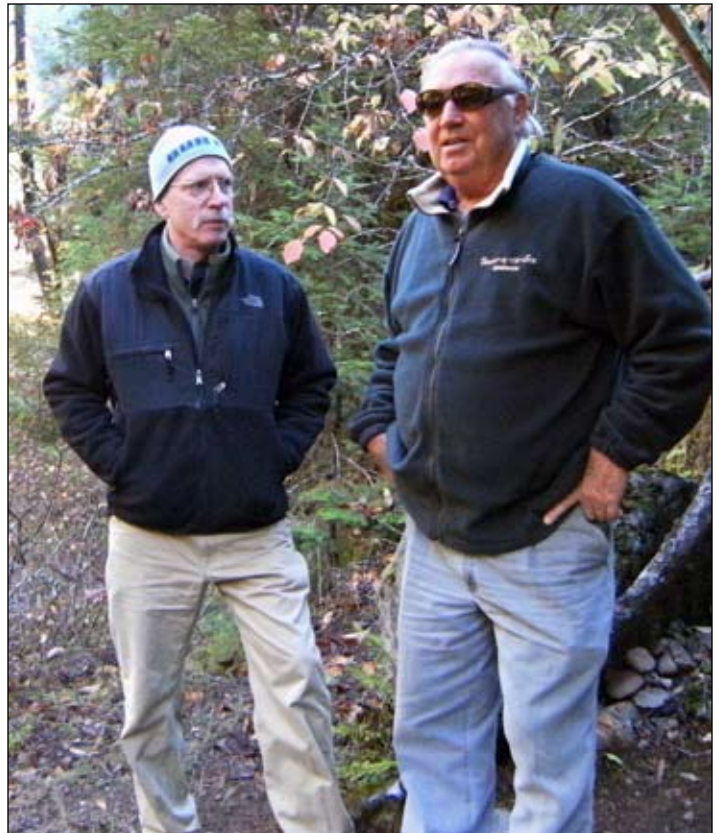


Photo by Russell Bassett

Lee Spencer of the North Umpqua Foundation Fish Watch program, and NFS N. Umpqua River Steward Rob Bowler discuss summer steelhead in Steamboat Creek Oct. 22.

by an additional 40,000 fish. Spring Chinook are almost completely degraded due to temperature issues.

Fish passage at Soda Springs Dam remains a high priority. We were given a tour of the facility and looked at the fish passage projects that have already been completed and plans for the fish ladder at Soda Springs Dam. PacifiCorp plans to have the fish ladder in place by 2012 as long as they are not allowed to push through another delaying tactic. Dam removal remains an option. Action: Insure PacifiCorp does not attempt another delaying tactic and encourage them to consider dam removal.

Laura Jackson, the district biologist for the river, is a hatchery and harvest advocate who has tried to push through harvest of 1 in 5 wild fish on the N. Umpqua and is now pushing to stock 60,000 winter steelhead in the N. Umpqua. Salem shot down her proposal to start harvesting broodstock for the program this winter, but she will likely continue to push for both of these changes in the future.

Non-native bass remain an issue for the main stem Umpqua.

Steward Overview

The Native Fish Society's Steward for the N. Umpqua is Rob Bowler. In addition, Peter Tronquet and Jim Thurber also share stewardship duties for the main stem and Smith River. Rob Bowler is in a good position to fight for native fish on the watershed as he has lived on the river since 1973, was very active in Steamboaters and remains close friends with conservationists in the area who have worked to protect N. Umpqua for a half a century and more.



Photo by Russell Bassett

Summer steelhead rest in a thermal refuge in Steamboat Creek in October. Steamboat is the main summer steelhead spawning tributary of the North Umpqua.

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NFS events

by Fran Taylor
NFS Administrative Assistant

Wild & Scenic Environmental Film Festival

The Native Fish Society was honored to present the largest environmental film festival in North America on Nov. 8 at the Hollywood Theatre in Portland. This festival, sponsored by Patagonia, began as a celebration of achieving Wild & Scenic status for 39 miles of the South Yuba River in 1999 by the South Yuba Citizens League.

Film-goers were treated to an evening of eight environmentally-minded films, including films on global warming, land-use practices and sustainable farming. In addition, NFS hosted a raffle, and several different organizations had booths at the event with freebies and information.

While there were a few glitches with the movie presentation, overall the experience was very positive, as film-goers and sponsors alike expressed their happiness with the event.

This evening heightened awareness in fish conservation issues and empowered citizens to make a difference in their own community.

"It was a good collection of insightful film clips about various environmental issues, and provided outreach to an audience we don't normally have contact with," Bakke said. "I was really encouraged by the attendance and the enthusiasm shown by the film-goers. We are looking forward to repeating the experience next year."

Home Waters

Our always popular Native Fish Society Auction and Banquet is just around the corner. Be sure to mark your calendar for Saturday, March 21 to attend "Home Waters," this year's auction theme.

"Home waters represents how we work for native fish," said NFS Development Director Tom Derry. "Here at NFS we act locally and think globally. Our River Stewards are working on the same rivers on which they grew up and live on. Stewardship is key to the recovery of native fish in the Pacific Northwest, and we want people to be excited about all the premier fisheries that are right in their backyard. As travel becomes more expensive or not possible, now more than ever, we need to be focused on our local watersheds."

This is your chance to support native fish in the Pacific Northwest by attending this fun-filled evening. There will be a great variety of silent, super-silent and live auction items certain to appeal to non-fishing and fishing-related interests.



Photo by Ken Anderson

NFS members enjoy the '08 auction last spring. The 2009 Auction and Banquet, Home Waters, is March 21 and will once again be held at Montgomery Park.

"Last year's auction had an electricity to it that is indescribable; I've never felt that at any other event, and this year we plan to have just as much if not more fun."

"This year's auction is going to be the biggest and best auction ever," Derry said. "We will have an amazing array of quality products, including trips on home waters and international waters."

Montgomery Park is the venue, and Food and Bloom Catering will serve up a fabulous dinner. You will also enjoy skilled auctioneer Johnna Wells as she helps raise money to support native fish. North Umpqua conservation legend Frank Moore is this year's guest speaker.

Plan to bring your family and friends to this gala event. More information to come after the holidays.

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Photo by Ken Anderson

Johnna Wells will once again be the auctioneer for the '09 auction, and conservation legend Frank Moore is the guest speaker.

Molalla, from Page 5

This month NFS is conducting an informal spawning survey to try and determine Coho abundance in the Molalla.

Resident trout, both rainbow and cutthroat, appear to be thriving.

Historically there were upwards of 8,000 salmon returning to the Molalla, and after spawning those fish died, providing much needed nutrients to the entire food web, including insects, fish, mammals, birds and vegetation. As there have been less and less returning salmon (this year not even 100) those much needed nutrients are no longer naturally present, so the Native Fish Society (in conjunction with ODFW) is in its fourth year of conducting nutrient enhancement in the Molalla River. So far this year we have placed 2,500 carcasses in the upper reaches of all three forks of the river. Last year 3,000 carcasses were placed in the river.

Several regulation changes have been made to the river, which provide extra protection for fish. The fishing deadline for salmon and steelhead has been moved down from Horse Creek Bridge to Pine Creek Bridge and bait is no longer allowed on the river except from May 15 to July 15 while fishing for salmon. We ask that you please abide by these new regulations. The new fishing deadline is important as both winter steelhead and spring Chinook spawn between Pine Creek and Horse Creek, and use of bait greatly increases the mortality of anadromous smolts and resident trout. Please also bear in mind that the entire river is catch and release for all resident trout and winter steelhead. Hatchery Chinook and wild Coho may be harvested. There is no harvest limit for smallmouth bass, which are prolific near the mouth.

The Molalla River Alliance is helping to bring different groups together for native fish recovery.

“The Alliance is a template for recovery of a watershed, which in turn supports recovery of wild fish,” Derry said. “Any time you put a group together like that it gives you a lot more power to accomplish the goals of better water quality, increased flows, and fish and wildlife protection and restoration.”

The Alliance is also pushing for Wild and Scenic status for the river, which if established, could provide extra protection for the river’s native fish.

The Alliance’s Science Committee, which includes biologists from ODFW and NOAA, is focused on recovering spring Chinook.

“Through the MRA Science Commit-



Photo by Mark Schmidt

This wild winter steelhead was caught on the Molalla River this winter. The winter steelhead run has steadily improved over the last decade, with an estimated 1,500 fish returning to the Molalla in 2008.

tee, we have experts in the field working together to determine what needs to be done to recover spring Chinook in the basin, and we’ve established watershed priorities that need to be addressed to recover all native fish in the river,” said Derry, who is also the MRA Science Committee chair.

Several new projects are in the works for 2009, including fish-barrier culvert removal on Cedar and Trout Creek. Weyerhaeuser has already contributed \$30,000 for the projects and the Native Fish Society is working with Oregon Trout, American Rivers and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for the additional funding.

Other NFS fish enhancement projects for the river that are in the works for 2009 are screening of irrigation ditches and temperature monitoring. Twenty temperature gauges have been purchased that NFS will place throughout the upper drainage in May and then retrieve in October. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality’s recently published draft Total Maximum Daily Loads for the river, which highlighted that the entire Molalla-Pudding Subbasin (except for the North Fork) is listed under the Clean Water Act for high temperatures, and temperature monitoring will be used to help reverse this trend.

The Native Fish Society recently made comments on the draft TMDL, highlighting the need for a change to regulatory framework in order to better protect the river.

Conclusion

In the recent past, the river divided this community, but today it is bringing the community together. The city has realized what a valuable resource it has in the river,

and has joined with others to protect and enhance it.

Not everyone is happy about the city’s involvement with the Molalla River Alliance, as evidenced by the testimony of one individual at Nov. 19’s Molalla City Council meeting. The person who testified at the meeting lumped the Alliance in with three of its environmentally-minded member groups (including NFS) and blamed these groups for the lumber industry’s decline in the Molalla area. He also didn’t appreciate that the city was providing a law enforcement presence in the Corridor.

I think that voice is a minority, as most people realize that if the city is going to take from the river as a drinking fountain, toilet and boost to the economy, it needs to give back to the river as well.

“The Molalla River provides two key values as far as the city is concerned,” Atkins said. “We get our drinking water there, so we want quality and volume, and that means protecting the watershed and keeping the stream clear of erosion and pollution. (The Molalla River Recreation Corridor) is really the undiscovered jewel of Oregon back country and is a magnet for tourism that benefits the city economically.”

Moody noted that the Alliance has no agenda that clashes with the timber industry on their lands.

“We would love to have Weyerhaeuser come to our meetings and join us. We would love for them to trust us,” he said. “The Alliance does not have a single conservation goal that is against the interests of what Weyerhaeuser does. If we could coordinate with Weyerhaeuser, we could potentially increase law enforcement efforts and reduce criminal impacts to their own lands.”

Umpqua, from Page 11

Rob's collaborative efforts bore fruit earlier this autumn when the Resource Coordination Committee shot down PacifiCorp's efforts to delay fish passage at Soda Springs Dam. Rob's letter-writing campaign and public outreach efforts helped ensure that the delaying tactics were not accepted.

Rob is currently working with BLM to ensure forest practices do not harm native fish, and is also working with BLM to do some sticks-in-streams projects in the Steamboat drainage.

Q&A with ODFW District Biologist Laura Jackson

Q: What are the spawner abundance objectives/goals for North Umpqua steelhead?

A: The spawner abundance objective for winter steelhead is 5,720 returning adult fish and a little less for summer steelhead. We are meeting our objectives and could have harvest on wild fish.

Q: How were the abundance goals achieved?

A: A productivity model created by Mark Chilcote that takes into account habitat that is available, number of fish coming across, smolts produced, and predicts what happens at different levels of fish populations. Steamboaters agreed with the production model. Umpqua is unique in that it has large data sets and several ways to monitor fish. Model created in 2004 or 2005.

Q: Is the fishery managed to achieve the abundance goals?

A: Yes it is. A management tool is harvest and we are averaging about 12 percent harvest. Federal lands are pretty stable. North has more protection. The North is the most restrictive fishery. South Umpqua has lots of agriculture lands.

Q: Are the abundance goals for wild-origin fish or a combination of wild and hatchery fish?

A: Wild.

Q: What are the nutrient enhancement goals for the North and South Umpqua and major tribs?

A: 2,500 pounds per mile is the goal based on DEQ general guidelines. We are really under the nutrient levels. The entire season of steelhead is less than 50 pounds per mile in Rock Creek, Coho is seven pounds per mile per week, and Chinook is 400 pounds per mile per season. We are underneath nutrient values, so it looks like we could load up more.

Q: Is the nutrient enhancement goal based on wild spawners, hatchery carcass distribution, processed pellets or a combination?

A: Nutrient Enhancement goal is based on DEQ general guidelines

Q: Is the goal based on historical abundance?

A: No. All fish killed at the hatchery are used for nutrient enhancement as long as there are not disease issues. We are not burying or burning any fish that can be used for nutrient enhancement.

Q: What is the plan and timeframe to create Native Fish Conservation Plans by species for the Umpqua A: Priorities for conservation plans are Coho Conservation Plan (already completed), Rogue River Spring Chinook (already completed), Coastal Spring Chinook (meeting end of November, STEP biologist working on it part time), South Coast fall Chinook, broader fall Chinook for the Coast, then steelhead plan. It will be one to three years before we start on a steelhead depending on whether or not they can work on multiple plans at the same time. Headed by conservation recovery



Photo by Russell Bassett

The sun sets over the North Umpqua in October.

staff out of Salem. Takes about a year to get one done.

Q: What is the source of stock for hatchery releases?

A: No out of basin stock in the entire Umpqua watershed. Not only are we within the Umpqua system, but we are actually within the basins as well. South Umpqua broodstock are harvested by a fishing group. Rock Creek Hatchery rears all the fish for the entire Umpqua basin, including the South Fork, except for the Gardner Hatchery, a Coastal program, which are mostly placed in the N. Fork of the Smith River. Of this program, 225,000 hatchery fish are marked from a total of 300,000.

Q: Are there any attempts to isolate non-natives from wilds such as a return-to-trib capture site?

A: Summer steelhead are separating themselves on the North Umpqua. Looking at developing a conservation plan for Umpqua chub and that could be an opportunity to create finger weirs to keep bass from getting into chub habitat.

Q: What are the top five threats to recovery of native fish in the Umpqua basin?

A: What we develop as society for land use patterns, ties into a lot of quality. If you don't have the habitat and water quality no matter what you do regarding fish regulations it doesn't really matter. It could be urbanization, agricultural processes, and timber practices. The ocean plays into it too. We are continuing to see dead zones and how do we measure for that?

Q: What is the plan to stock winter steelhead in the North Umpqua? When will that start? How many?

A: It's an option that we could develop. It would be a fairly safe program because for our winter steelhead it would be easy to catch stock and then acclimate and rear them at Rock Creek for two years and they will come back to Rock Creek. If Rock Creek gets a sorter like we want, we could run a really clean program. If you look at the South Umpqua, they are being acclimated for three weeks on the South and then homing back to Canyon Creek, so we would have good homing on the North. We talked about starting it this winter, but there would be a process you would have to go through. We would have to have an HGMP. Go through public input. We would have to notify the public. Salem said let's wait a little bit and think it through a little more. This program would not have a lot of strays, would have good genetics, offering harvest opportunity with little impact to wild fish. Showed on the South Umpqua that there is a less than 2 percent stray rate.

Salmon, from Page 6

Harvest Impacts

Harvest can subtract adult spawners from the natural breeding population and limit the productivity of wild salmon and the expected benefits from investments in habitat improvement. We recognize the value of improving habitat, but we don't just need salmon habitat, we need salmon too. We need wild salmon that are adapted to the habitat and make effective use of it.

In order to ensure that harvest is supporting wild salmon recovery Oregon needs to adopt spawner abundance goals for each watershed and make sure through harvest management that those goals are achieved. An estimate of spawner and juvenile rearing capacity of each watershed can be completed, setting a target for full utilization

by salmon and steelhead. This logical approach is being used in Alaska and for many countries with Atlantic salmon. Oregon has adopted a harvest rate method for managing salmon rather than spawner abundance.

Action: Since most wild salmon and steelhead populations in Oregon are threatened and there are none that are overly abundant, a change in harvest management is needed. A responsibility of harvest managers is to make sure there are enough wild spawners to maintain a healthy natural population that fully utilizes the habitat and provides ecological and social services. This is not how the ODFW manages harvest and a change is needed.

Policy Impact

Harvest, hatchery, and habitat management policies in Oregon are major limiting

factors for sustainable salmonid management and recovery. In Oregon the legislature has correctly directed the Department of Fish and Wildlife to "prevent the serious depletion of indigenous species."

According to a 1997 opinion from the assistant attorney general, the "Commission's and Department's overriding obligation is to manage to prevent serious depletion, which thereby enables the Department and Commission to provide optimum recreational and aesthetic benefits." This policy was confirmed by the Attorney General's Office in 2006

The agency and the commission have not carried out that legislative mandate as confirmed by the many ESA-listed wild salmon and steelhead in Oregon's rivers.

Action: An audit of the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is needed to determine whether its management is consistent with state law.

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