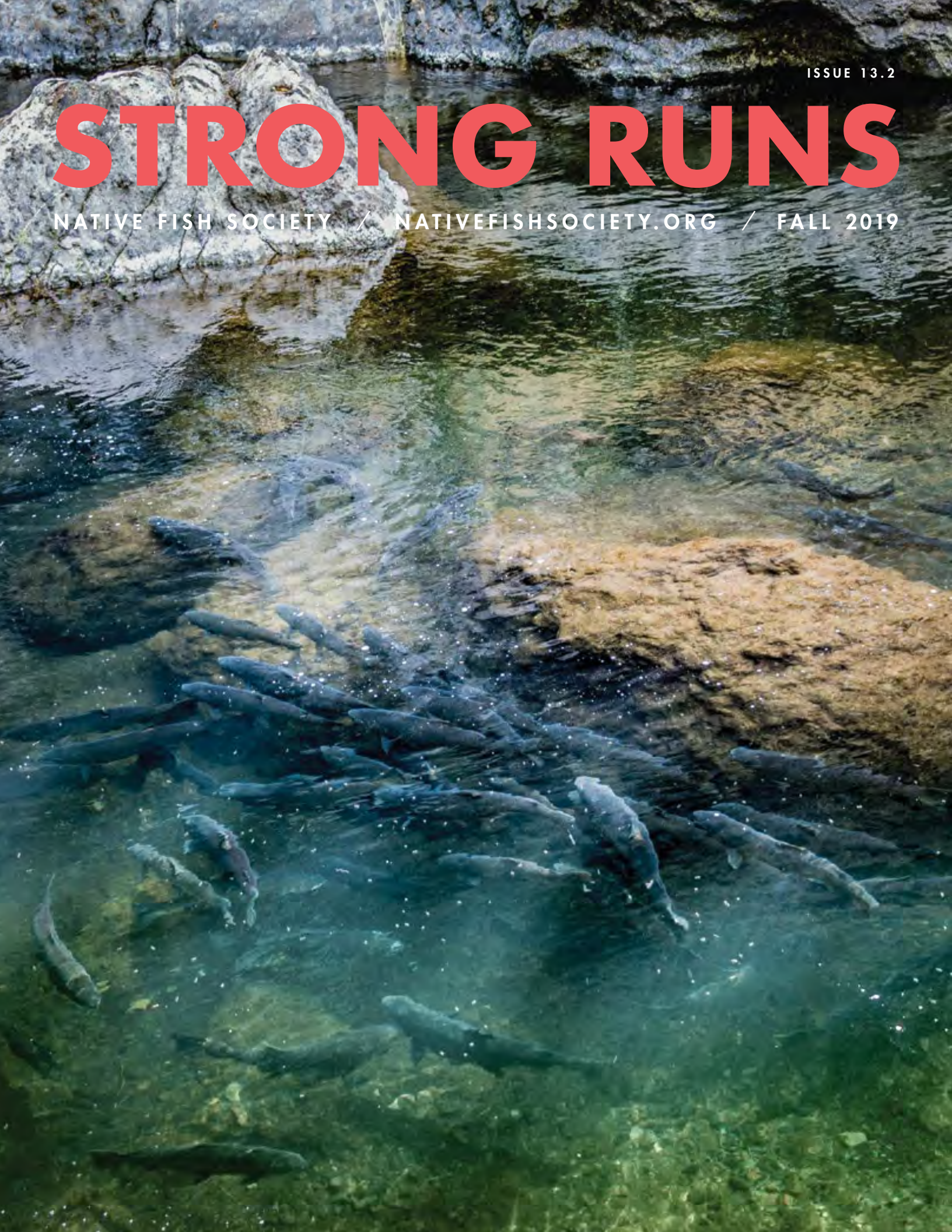


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STRONG RUNS

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MESSAGE
FROM THE
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR

TALKING TURKEY

A Lesson From One Of Conservation's Great Success Stories

I'm not a hunter. I'm not a big fan of cranberry sauce. On Thanksgiving, I reach for the mashed potatoes. Unlike Ben Franklin, I'm happy with the bald eagle as our national bird. I do tie muddlers with turkey tail feathers and brake for toms on Highway 38 along the lower Umpqua River, but otherwise don't give gobblers much thought—until lately. There's more to wild turkeys than meets the eye.

The recovery of wild turkeys may be the greatest wildlife conservation story in American history—a story that provides a blueprint for restoring other imperiled species, including native fish.

When Europeans arrived in North America, wild turkeys were found from Canada to Mexico, and numbered in the millions. By the early twentieth century, just 30,000 birds remained. Many conservationists believed that wild turkeys would soon be a thing of the past.

Early European settlers had no understanding of turkey biology or habitat. They were thought

to be limitless, and were hunted and poached relentlessly. The forests they used for roosting, feeding, and breeding were logged and turned into farmland. Like other imperiled species, habitat loss and overharvest drove turkeys toward extinction.

An early attempt to save wild turkeys involved raising them in hatcheries. At first, they were bred and raised in pens before being released into the wild. These turkeys domesticated quickly. They hung around farms and roads, where they were easily picked off by predators and poachers. In an attempt to improve their survival, wild turkeys were captured, bred, and their offspring raised in hatcheries. There were challenges with breeding, so captured wild toms were then bred with domesticated hens. Still, predators, which had the upper hand in the cleared fields and forests, continued to pick off hatchery turkeys. Between 1925 and 1944, Missouri's Conservation Commission spent \$100,000 releasing 15,000 hatchery turkeys in a futile attempt to recover their ailing populations. Thankfully, the hatchery approach was abandoned.

WORDS

Mark Sherwood,
Executive Director

ABOVE

Once imperiled and now abundant, the revival of the American wild turkey is not only one of conservation's great success stories, it's an excellent example for wild fish advocates to follow.

Art: Courtesy of the John James Audubon Center

"A case could be made that fishing home water and taking good care of it is what an angler should do."

—TOM MCGUANE

COVER

Wild spring Chinook salmon in a summer refuge pool on an Oregon Coast stream. Photo: Duncan Berry, *Salmon River Steward*

ABOVE

Ahead of the North Creek culvert removal, volunteers salvaged native fish like these juvenile coho salmon. Photo: Conrad Gowell, *Fellowship Program Director*

**MESSAGE
FROM THE
EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR**

Starting with conservationists like Teddy Roosevelt and later with citizen-based groups like the National Wild Turkey Federation, turkey habitat was identified and protected. Biologists studied their biological needs and respectful hunting regulations began to reflect their tenuous condition. Strong enforcement mechanisms curbed poaching. Slowly but surely, the wild turkey began to scratch its way back from the brink and into prairies, woodlands, and river valleys across the American landscape. Today, with an estimated population of more than seven million birds, the wild turkey is alive, well, and strutting its stuff.

BELOW

Wild revival requires both healthy habitats and respectful fisheries. In Alaska, strict fisheries enforcement has allowed both the Bristol Bay salmon fishery and the wild salmon of the Nanek River to flourish.

Photo: Conrad Gowell, Fellowship Program Director

I suspect that anyone familiar with the decline of wild salmon in the Pacific Northwest and the failure of hatcheries to revive them will find this story as poignant as I did. If we are serious about reviving abundant wild fish, its message is loud and clear.

So here's the blueprint:

1. Protect and fix habitat.
2. Respect life when you take it.

That's it.

We at Native Fish Society have talked at length about the economic, genetic, and ecological impacts of salmon hatcheries. But perhaps more importantly, salmon hatcheries

do nothing for salmon habitat and fail to encourage respectful harvest. They were built at the base of dams that blocked habitat and supported by extractive industries that degraded it. Historically, hatcheries promised more fish than nature could produce, so overfishing wasn't addressed. Now, anglers are encouraged to harvest all hatchery fish to keep them from spawning with imperiled wild fish. We make the fish, hatcheries claim, so we can take as much as we want. This kind of thinking does not lend itself to respectful harvest or respect for habitat.

If the story of the American wild turkey has proven anything, it's that hatcheries are not a path to abundance. What is? First, let's work together to establish more rivers without releases of hatchery fish. Second, let's identify and reform the hatcheries that cause the most harm to fish and people. Finally, let's shift public investment in fish conservation toward addressing the root causes of wild fish decline: overfishing, habitat degradation, and the lack of volitional fish passage.

The final lesson of the wild turkey is: even when the situation is truly dire, we can bring a species back from the brink. If we focus our energy, our resources, and our passion on the right things, we can restore abundant wild salmon in the Pacific Northwest. Let's go together, let's do it together—it's the only way. 🐟

GET INVOLVED

Native Fish Society exists to revive abundant wild fish, free flowing rivers, and thriving local communities. We want to empower you to take action on behalf of wild rivers and native fish. Visit nativefishsociety.org to find out more about volunteering as a River Steward, lending your special skill to our conservation campaigns as a Native Fish Fellow, or joining the wild fish movement as an NFS Member.



RIVER STEWARD LEGACY

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PAST RIVER STEWARDS AND BUILDING ON THEIR WISDOM

One summer, camped on Oregon's Molalla River, I was kept up all night by what sounded like twenty-pound boulders being dropped into a nearby pool. The next morning, I went looking for the culprits with a mask and snorkel. Spring Chinook, it turned out, were to blame for my sleepless night. When I rose from the river to clear fog from my mask, I was greeted by Molalla River Steward Mark Schmidt.

He was sharing promising pools where I could find staging Chinook when a car approached. The driver wanted to know about a nearby property for sale. Naturally, we started talking about the Molalla's many qualities. Mark passionately described the native fish, their unique run timings, and even offered local knowledge on fishing tactics, seasons, and regulations.

"I don't give a damn about regulations," the would-be buyer interrupted. "If I own riverfront property, I'll harvest whatever I want whenever I want."

"Then you would be a poacher," Mark replied, calmly. "That's a problem because I'll call you in for being a poacher, and your neighbor over there would call you a poacher, and everyone in this community would know that you are a poacher."

Sometimes a River Steward's call to action is as

unexpected as that moment on the Molalla and they must rise to the occasion. Other times, it is calculated ahead of time to accomplish a strategic objective. Inevitably, stewardship of a watershed works its way into our volunteers's everyday lives, so the scope of their contributions can be challenging to describe.

This year, we are proud to announce a new NFS River Steward Legacy identity to honor volunteers who have made important contributions to our mission, but no longer carry the River Steward title. I am proud to recognize the late Mark Schmidt on our Legacy list and honor his years of stewardship. His name is now listed alongside others whose passion, knowledge, and time have advanced Native Fish Society's cause and enriched the River Steward Program.

Our volunteers are critical to Native Fish Society's mission. The NFS Legacy List includes volunteers who, for whatever reason, are no longer able to serve this role. Whether because of a change in occupation, a move to a new location, or an addition to their family, the list includes former NFS River Stewards who we want to honor. Even though they've moved on, we are still building on their contributions, shared knowledge, and place-based wisdom. We are proud to honor them with the NFS River Steward Legacy identity. 🐟

WORDS

Jake Crawford, River Steward Program Director

PHOTO

The late Mark Schmidt was a passionate advocate for the Molalla River and its wild, native fish. We are proud to recognize Mark on the NFS River Steward Legacy list.

Photo: Russ Ricketts



CONSIDERING ALL THE OPTIONS

THE TRADEOFFS OF DAM OPERATIONS ON OREGON'S DESCHUTES RIVER

WORDS

Jennifer Fairbrother,
Campaign &
Columbia Regional
Director

ABOVE

Likely the result of warmer, early-season temperatures and increased nutrient loading from PGE's Selective Water Withdrawal operations, both the composition and prevalence of algae in the lower Deschutes have changed over the last few years.

Photo: Bob Wick

At Native Fish Society, much of the work we undertake is about connection. The connection of our River Stewards and Members to the places they hold dear; the connection of communities to the ecological, social, spiritual, and economic benefits of rivers; and the connection of wild fish to the health of their homewaters. This ethos of connection resonates deeply in our efforts to reform dam operations around the region.

We often speak of dams as the blockage in the circulatory system of a watershed. Like a blockage in an artery, dams impede the flow of water, nutrients, and vital system functions. And like a human heart deprived of its vital needs, a river too can fail and even die when it's cut in two by a dam.

In some basins, like central Oregon's Deschutes River, dam operators are being forced to address the problematic impacts of their infrastructure and operations in an effort to reconnect the river and restore wild fisheries both above and below the dams. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that expensive technofixes, which attempt to mimic the function of free-flowing rivers, may merely exacerbate the problems impacting a river caused in part by the dams themselves.

It's possible that no amount of operational and infrastructural changes to the Deschutes' dams can ameliorate their detrimental impacts to the health and function of the river. Yet the potential costs and benefits to water quality, fisheries, tribal needs, and community interests that would result from truly reconnecting the river—through dam removal—has yet to be considered or evaluated.

On the Deschutes, thanks to the publication of a multi-year water quality study and modeling report, new information is now available that makes this the opportune time to consider the full suite of future options for the basin. The study, commissioned by Portland General Electric, the operator of the Pelton Round Butte hydroelectric project, tested current water quality in the basin for comparison to historical data, in order to assess how changes in dam operations and infrastructure have impacted water quality. Specifically, the study analyzed whether the Selective Water Withdrawal system—a structure used to mimic natural water temperatures downstream of the Pelton Round Butte hydroelectric project—has changed water quality in the reservoirs and lower river. Second, the project created a model to assess potential impacts to downstream

water quality from changes in operations at the dams and SWW, as well as changes to other influencing factors in the upper Deschutes Basin.

The study and modeling provide insight into several key findings. According to the report's authors, the SWW does perform as intended to modify water temperatures downstream of the dam. But this solution, which seeks to imitate a connected river while still maintaining dams as major barriers, has had unintended consequences for water quality.

The study's conclusions suggest that temperature and fish passage operations at the SWW are now sending more nutrients and algae into the lower river. In order to increase downstream temperatures in the spring and early summer, the SWW is releasing the warmer, nutrient-rich surface waters from the reservoirs. Likely the result of warmer, early-season temperatures and increased nutrient loading from SWW operations, both the composition and prevalence of algae in the lower Deschutes have changed over the last few years.

Eleven model scenarios were evaluated exploring how operational adjustments at the

SWW and changes in upper basin inputs like nitrogen and tributary temperatures could impact water quality in the lower river. As of yet, no silver bullet has emerged that will improve problematic water quality indicators including dissolved oxygen, pH, nutrient loading, algae concentrations, and periphyton abundance. Scenarios that may improve some water quality parameters are infeasible—such as the idea of reducing anthropogenic nitrogen inputs to the reservoirs by 75%. Others come at the expense of fisheries reintroduction and temperature goals for the lower basin. NFS, our partners, state agencies, the public, and dam managers must weigh the costs and benefits of any operational or infrastructural changes to Deschutes dam operations.

The water quality study and modeling will provide us all with a better understanding of the various trade offs, and allow us to consider other potential scenarios as well. To better understand the limits of the model, two independent reviews have been commissioned, one by PGE and the other by the conservation organizations engaged on the Pelton Round Butte Fish Committee, including Trout Unlimited, American Rivers, WaterWatch, and NFS.

ABOVE

Perfectly adapted to life in the desert, reddsides rainbows are the native trout of the Deschutes River Basin.



WATERSHED MOMENTS

ABOVE

It is becoming increasingly clear that expensive technofixes, which attempt to mimic the function of free-flowing rivers, may merely exacerbate the problems impacting a river caused in part by the dams themselves.

Photo: Jennifer Fairbrother

Much of the current narrative about the Deschutes River revolves around comparisons of the lower river before and after the initiation of water temperature control and upper basin fisheries reintroduction efforts. But this focus fails to consider the whole picture; it fails to acknowledge the profound changes wrought with the construction of the Pelton Round Butte dam complex more than fifty years ago. And it fails to consider the water quality impacts originating from the upper basin that the dams can only hide for so long. In many respects, the dam complex on the Deschutes has historically ameliorated some of the problems emanating from the upper basin by trapping warmer, nutrient-rich water in the reservoirs while releasing cold, less nutrient-rich water from the bottom of the dams during the spring and summer. The fact of the matter is that the loss of connection in the middle of such a large and diverse basin has drastically altered the lower river ever since the dams were erected.

Thus far, the options on the table have been constrained. Some advocate for going back to dam operations before the SWW, while others want to explore potential operational adjustments to the existing temperature control and fish reintroduction infrastructure. But, as the modeling seems to suggest, it is unlikely that

either of these fixes will be enough to meet the water-quality and fish-recovery goals that the multiplicity of interests in the basin share.

As project managers explore options to improve the health and viability of the Deschutes basin, it's time to include the ultimate way to reconnect the function of the river: dam removal. It's time to assess the outcomes for the basin in light of a changing climate with and without the dams. It's time to explore ways to address the social, traditional, spiritual and economic needs of local communities and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs without the Deschutes River dams.

With a struggling reintroduction program in the upper basin, and dam operations exacerbating water quality issues in the lower river, it's time to start considering all our options. The Deschutes and its native fish are at the end of the line after more than five decades of a disconnected river. It's time for us to evaluate whether reconnecting the Deschutes is possible. 🐟

You can review the water quality study and modeling report at: <https://www.portlandgeneral.com/corporate-responsibility/environmental-stewardship/water-quality-habitat-protection/deschutes-river/deschutes-water-quality>

A PHOTO ESSAY OF THE NORTH CREEK RESTORATION

Drip, drip, drop . . . The first rain drops of fall arrive, closing out summer's stretching rays. The drops keep coming, turning into a steady pour. The rain keeps pouring, rivers begin to rise until they become muddy brown and trees start floating down. With this change, fall salmon make their initial push out of the estuaries into freshwater.

High on a ridge, studded with old growth and ferns, the soil becomes heavy and saturated. The ground suddenly gives way on the steep slopes, sending a torrent of mud, boulders, cobbles, and trees careening toward the river below. This landslide provides the stream with its structural elements, which create a healthy, complex environment.

That first rain drop was the catalyst initiating substantial change in the watershed it fell on. Insignificant by itself, yet a vital instigator to the processes leading up to the point at which the ground gave way. A drop of water leads to rivers of rain.

For the North Creek project, the first metaphorical raindrop occurred when two steelheaders met over a smokey streamside

fire and decided that they were going to do something about the culvert blocking sixteen miles of premium spawning habitat. As the years went by, more drops fell with a letter campaign drawing interest, support, and inertia for the project. The letter campaign led to partnerships with the local watershed council, the U.S. Forest Service, and Native Fish Society. With a shared commitment, the drops turned into a steady drizzle. The drizzle became a torrential downpour as grant money materialized and engineering plans were finalized. Finally, supersaturation occurred as ground was broken, leading to the culvert's removal and replacement with a suitable structure that allowed aquatic life to migrate throughout North Creek.

Like the events leading up to a landslide, a single drop by itself is insignificant. But with each successive drop, the point at which there is no return becomes more probable. So it was with the North Creek Campaign. This project could not have been accomplished by an individual, or even a single group. It was accomplished by many interconnected individuals who were committed to improving the health of a watershed, drop by drop. Thank you for supporting the North Creek Campaign! 🐟

WORDS

Matt Lund,
Siletz River Steward

PHOTOS

Conrad Gowell,
Fellowship Program
Director

ABOVE

Before and after:
the mouth of North
Creek in Oregon's
Siletz River Basin.



RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY

Speaking Up For The Wild Spring Chinook Of The Oregon Coast

About the time the first thimbleberries turn their bright, lipstick red is when to head into the coastal range of Oregon in search of cool water. In the shade of sitka spruce, western hemlock, fir, and cedar, the mosses cover the riverside cobble that is interspersed with Columbine blooms, tall sedges, and stonefly exoskeletons. Vultures soar above, riding the thermals of the winds coming in off the North Pacific, and kingfishers are poised on their perches searching for food.

Sitting there, bearing witness to the handful of spring Chinook salmon lying calmly in the pool, I couldn't think of how I could possibly break the news to the public that these fish are threatened. In the past, announcements of extinction and extirpation have been forms of violence that the environmental community has imparted on the psyche. Chronicles of devastation come first, followed by a set of legal requirements that attempt to force massive societal change in order to avert ecological collapse. It always starts with "SAVE THE... (fill in the blank)...!!!" and ends with the same disheartening, divisive politics.

In the past century-and-a-half, there have been

so many forms of harm. Gillnets have been strung across rivers like a wall, blocking all migration to home gravels. Dynamite has been flung into refuge pools like a weapon of mass destruction. Forests have been stripped of their wealth, ore has been extracted from the earth, embryos and offspring have been taken.

Truth is, these fish are tough and resilient and magnificent beings that do not need saving. Instead, they need respect. They are here, asking for acknowledgment and the basic conditions that allow them to live their lives. I'm certain there is no one action that will be able to give that, but, if the status quo continues, our relationship with spring Chinook won't continue.

In 1900, wild spring Chinook inhabited almost every Oregon Coast river with a major estuary. Over the next century, those fish would become a poignant example of the shifting baseline. In 1991, the Coastal Chinook Management Plans acknowledged eleven populations in what would later be classified as the Oregon Coast Evolutionarily Significant Unit. A 1998 document from the Native Fish Status Report reduced that

WORDS

Conrad Gowell,
*Fellowship Program
Director*

ABOVE

A school of spring Chinook ride out the summer in refuge pool on an Oregon Coast stream.

Photo: Duncan Berry,
Salmon River Steward



ABOVE
The ancient divergence between early and late maturing Chinook is looking more and more like it only happened once.


Photo: Conrad Gowell

number to nine. In 2014, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife released its Coastal Multi-Species Conservation and Management Plan, which cut the number of Oregon Coast ESUs to just two. From the Necanicum River south to the Coquille, the disappearance is becoming normalized and accepted. The fish are being erased from human consciousness.

Spring Chinook in the Oregon Coast ESU were previously petitioned for listing by the Oregon Natural Resources Council in 1994. In their review of the petition, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) acknowledged the unique life history, habitat needs, and longstanding decline of spring Chinook, but ultimately decided that a listing was “not warranted.” The decision resulted from an interpretation of genetic data by the agency that led to an aggregation of spring and fall Chinook populations. It was assumed that, because the two species had a polyphyletic evolutionary history, they did not need to be managed separately. Essentially, the federal government was betting that co-occurring spring and fall Chinook populations were genetically similar enough that, if spring Chinook were extirpated, future runs could be re-established from fall Chinook populations. That theory continues to be tested. In 2018, only a couple dozen fish returned to the South Umpqua River, one of

the remaining populations acknowledged in the current management plan. They haven’t come back in the places they’ve been extirpated from, and the ancient divergence between early and late maturing Chinook is looking more and more like it only happened once.

The best available science is beginning to catch up with the cultural wisdom of tribes, which, since time immemorial, have acknowledged and respected these populations as distinct and managed them accordingly. Researchers from the University of California Davis found mounting evidence that, if these fish are lost, they won’t be re-established from their fall Chinook cousins. In a study of their own, geneticists at the Southwest Fisheries Science Center of the National Marine Fisheries Service are arriving at that same alarming conclusion.

In light of this new evidence, the Native Fish Society, along with the Center for Biological Diversity and Umpqua Watersheds, has asked NMFS to reconsider its “Not Warranted” decision in order to adequately protect the Oregon Coast’s last remaining spring Chinook populations. We have faith that a recovery planning process would not only show our respect and clarify our responsibilities, but revive abundant spring Chinook throughout the Oregon Coast as well. 



**CAMPAIGN
UPDATE**

THE PRECAUTIONARY APPROACH

We Need Catch-And-Release Fisheries For Wild Steelhead On Oregon’s South Coast

In southwest Oregon, longtime local anglers and guides have noticed a decline in numbers and size of wild steelhead returning to their waters. Starting in early 2018, Harvey Young of Fishhawk Guide Service started a petition for anglers of all gear types to generate support asking the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife for a moratorium on wild steelhead harvest in the southwest corner of the state.

When Harvey reached out asking for support, we connected him with River Stewards in the area to get an understanding of what level of impact they were witnessing in their homewaters.

We all shared concern over the lack of a management plan, inadequate funding to monitor the status of wild steelhead, and an increase in angling pressure in the area.

Sportfishing is the lifeblood of southwest Oregon during the winter months.

Unfortunately, history has demonstrated that agencies often permit the harvest of wild populations to the point of critical conservation concern, only to close fishing altogether to try and rebuild a struggling run.

Given the dramatic decline of wild steelhead across the Northwest, we believe it is in the best interest to take a precautionary approach to protect wild fish before populations collapse, while still providing fishing opportunity.

In June of 2018, Harvey submitted a written petition signed by 655 anglers, with more than 70 percent of the signatures coming from local southwest Oregon anglers, and the remainder from traveling anglers who visited the area to fish.

In September, Harvey added more than 3,000 electronic signatures from anglers across the region who want to see a moratorium on wild steelhead harvest to ensure we protect

WORDS

Jake Crawford, *River Steward Program Director*

ABOVE

Implementing catch-and-release regulations for wild steelhead in southwest Oregon would be the most cost-effective, equitable, and easy-to-implement management action to protect these important populations from overharvest.

Photo: Jason Hartwick



ABOVE

In southwest Oregon, there are ten rivers where anglers can still legally harvest wild steelhead.

these iconic fish before we are left to rebuild a recovering population.

The petition cites numerous reasons why catch-and-release regulations for wild steelhead would benefit anglers and businesses in southwest Oregon, but the main points are grounded in the fact that there is not a good understanding of the status and recent trends of wild steelhead in the region.

First, ODFW has no management plan for eight out of the ten rivers in southwest Oregon where wild steelhead harvest is still allowed. Furthermore, monitoring has been dramatically reduced due to inadequate funding and increased demands elsewhere in the state. The East Fork Coquille and Sixes rivers are managed under the Coastal Multi-Species Conservation and Management Plan (CMP), which was adopted by the Commission in 2015.

Concerns remain about whether the department is meeting their agreed-upon 10 percent harvest threshold for wild steelhead that was set in the CMP and adopted by the Commission. The best available science suggests a harvest rate of no more than 10 percent of fish that can spawn multiple times like steelhead to protect their diversity and resilience (Fujiwara, 2011).

In the absence of good empirical data and adequate funding for monitoring, fisheries managers across the Northwest have implemented catch-

and-release regulations. This has proven to be an effective management tool, while still providing fishing opportunity for sport anglers.

Except the Salmon River and Big Elk Creek, catch-and-release regulations for wild steelhead are already in place on every river in Oregon outside the Southwest Zone. Similar regulations have existed in British Columbia and Idaho since the 1980s, in California since 2010, and in Washington since 2015. In southeast Alaska, in an effort to protect the resource, the department went to a 36-inch minimum limit for anglers to harvest any steelhead, which, despite issues with size-selection bias, they believe protects more than 95 percent of those populations from harvest.

The National Marine Fisheries Service has identified fifteen Distinct Population Segments for steelhead across their native range in North America. Of the fifteen, eleven have been listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (Behnke, 2010).

In Oregon, six Distinct Population Segments for steelhead have been identified and four of those are listed under the federal Endangered Species Act because populations have crashed warranting protection by federal law.

Broadly speaking, wild steelhead across their native range are in decline, and the majority of populations require further protection.

While wild steelhead on the Oregon coast are not currently protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act, ODFW's own data—where it is available—has identified declining numbers of adult returns in the Southwest Zone, and monitoring has been dramatically reduced as a result of funding limitations (see The Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds Annual Reports available online).



ABOVE

In winter, sportfishing is the lifeblood of southwest Oregon's local economy.

Photo: Jason Hartwick

At the same time, an analysis of wild steelhead catch records in the Southwest Zone obtained through a public records request, showed that between 2005 and 2016 wild steelhead harvest increased, in some places up to 1200 percent (Elk River) and 650 percent (Sixes River).

In September 2018, Native Fish Society and a coalition of anglers, businesses, and other non-profits presented testimony to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission outlining our concerns and requesting that they implement a moratorium on wild steelhead harvest.


We presented information about the lack of adequate data to support existing regulations. According to the state's Native Fish Conservation Policy, "When faced with scientific uncertainty concerning fish management, including status assessments and the effectiveness of recovery strategies, the Department shall proceed with precautionary strategies scaled to the Conservation risk".

Given this mandate and inadequate funding to support the monitoring necessary to understand the current level of harvest impacts, we asked that the department take a precautionary approach to wild steelhead management.

Ultimately, the Commission voted to decrease the annual harvest limit from one wild steelhead per day and five per year, to one wild steelhead per day and three per year, and directed the department to develop a Conservation Plan to study the issue further. We will continue to advocate for wild steelhead by ensuring the department moves forward with those directives this year.

Implementing catch-and-release regulations for wild steelhead in the Southwest Zone would be the most cost-effective, equitable, and easy-to-implement management action to protect these important populations from overharvest.

Our goal is to ensure that populations flourish, not just survive, in southwest Oregon, and we're looking for your help in this effort. This fall, ODFW will be starting the public process for developing a new plan for the Rogue and South Coast rivers that incorporates steelhead and cutthroat trout into existing fall and spring Chinook management plans.

Join us in urging ODFW to protect the future of wild steelhead by adopting catch-and-release regulations in southwest Oregon. 

THE SUCCESSES OF OUR FAILURES

The Next Chapter In Our Efforts To Let Leaburg Go!

WORDS

Jennifer Fairbrother,
Campaign &
Columbia Regional
Director

ABOVE

The best hatchery is
a healthy river.

Photo: Conrad
Gowell

A friend and colleague once opined that conservation professionals do a poor job of celebrating the successes of our failures. We work hard and passionately to advance our campaigns towards the end goals we have set for ourselves. This often involves late nights and weekends spent away from home and family. And when we do succeed, when we are lucky enough to be at the end of a long journey, we (sometimes) take pause to reflect and celebrate that road to success.

But as with many things in life, we don't always reach the goals we have set for ourselves on the timeline or through the methods we had hoped. At these points, we often find ourselves evaluating and analyzing what worked and what didn't, but rarely do we take the time to celebrate the successes we had in spite of falling short of our goals.

During the 2019 Oregon legislative session, NFS Staff, River Stewards, and Members undertook the work of shuttering the deadbeat Leaburg Fish Hatchery on Oregon's iconic McKenzie River. The federal government, the owner of the facility, announced last year that they would be

ceasing hatchery production at Leaburg. In its proposed budget for the coming biennium, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife asked the State of Oregon to pick up funding for the facility and program. The aging facility is no longer necessary to meet the management goals for the McKenzie River or Willamette Basin, while its continued operations impact water quality and native fish and are detrimental to the recovery of threatened spring Chinook salmon and winter steelhead.

Our work to shutter Leaburg Fish Hatchery took many twists and turns throughout the legislative session. We successfully prevented funding for the hatchery from being included in the state's legislative budget process. But a walk out by Oregon Senate Republicans mere days before the end of the session threw Oregon's legislative process and the democracy it was founded on into chaos. To make a difficult situation even worse, funding for the Leaburg Hatchery was added as part of a last-minute bill to appease lawmakers by funding pet projects. This bill didn't receive a public hearing or even time for the public to weigh in. It was passed in the final hours of the legislative session and

sent to the governor for her signature. We held out hope that the governor would line-item veto funding for the hatchery, but on August 9 Governor Brown signed the funding package without a veto for the hatchery program.

While Leaburg ultimately received ongoing temporary funding for the next two years, there are so many aspects to this work that are worth celebrating. We were closer than we have ever come to shuttering a deadbeat hatchery through a concerted legislative campaign. And this success rested on the grassroots advocacy of the many Oregonians who called, emailed, and met with their state representatives, who signed numerous action alerts to key decision-makers, and who provided public testimony about the need to rightsize Oregon's hatchery infrastructure to protect our rivers, our wild fish, and our communities.

Thanks to the outpouring of engagement, the question over whether the state would provide funding for Leaburg Hatchery was one of the biggest issues inside the capital this session—some lawmakers reported hearing more from their constituents about the hatchery than about public retirement reform! This advocacy engaged and educated a large number of state lawmakers on the ecological, economic, and social issues surrounding fish hatcheries in the state. The work we did to build relationships and educate lawmakers has started a much larger conversation within the capital around hatcheries. With the help of all those who spoke up and took action, we have begun to change the narrative. Hatcheries are no longer just accepted; lawmakers are now considering the impacts they impart on our communities, rivers, and restoration of wild fisheries.

Native Fish Society remains committed to articulating and working toward a vision for Leaburg that doesn't include hatchery fish production. In the coming year, we will continue to engage with communities to work together toward a long-term solution for the facility. We



will be sure to keep you in the loop on how you can contribute to this important work.

We may not have reached our end goal this time around, but we sure had a lot of successes worth celebrating along the way. We at the NFS team thank all of you who were a part of this hard fought effort. We look forward to celebrating the next chapter with you. 🐟

ABOVE

On the steps of the capitol building in Salem, Oregon, NFS Staff and supporters told state lawmakers to Let Leaburg Go!



THE RESONANCE OF MANY VOICES

GROWING THE WOMEN FOR WILD FISH CIRCLE

WORDS

Tracy Buckner W4WF, Office Manager & Events

ABOVE

W4WF was created to bring the voices of women together in order to champion our wild places and wild fish.

Photo: Conrad Gowell

At Native Fish Society, our mission is most resonant when we include many voices. As an organization, we believe that we have a responsibility to create opportunities that are welcoming and supportive of people who identify as women, who act on behalf of fish, rivers, and communities.

Women For Wild Fish was created to bring the voices of women together in order to champion our wild places and wild fish. It takes dedicated people, with a deep connection to place to steward the Pacific Northwest's native fish and our shared homewaters. We are fortunate to have an increasing circle of thoughtful, intelligent women across the Northwest building such a movement. From Port Angeles, Washington to Port Orford, Oregon, these women are taking action for their homewaters and making a run for change.

At the recent NFS River Steward Gathering in Forks, Washington, we were delighted to welcome a handful of new women to the table. Each of them brought unique knowledge and deep insights about their homewaters. It was inspiring to hear these women speak about the successes and issues in and around the Olympic Peninsula. We were also fortunate to welcome and hear a presentation from Mara Zimmerman, Executive Director for the Coast Salmon Partnership, who works to keep our salmon runs, our livelihoods, and the way of life that depends on these fish healthy in some of the last best habitats in Washington State. You go, girl!

New members from Washington state are also flocking to the W4WF circle due in part to the strong leadership of NFS Washington Regional Coordinator J Michelle Swope. J Michelle is an

outspoken activist for the watersheds of Puget Sound. Her passion is contagious and easily rubs off on anyone willing to share a cold beer and listen to her talk about the fish and habitat she so cherishes. In June, W4WF held a Ladies Bugs & Brews event in Olympia where we met a group of women not only interested in learning to tie flies and imbibe in locally crafted beer, but who want to learn more about how they can be effective stewards for the watersheds that they call home.

In our current state of affairs, it is imperative that we act now, and often on the issues that affect our planet. Dr. Jane Goodall once said that “one individual cannot possibly make a difference, alone. It is individual efforts, collectively, that makes a noticeable difference—all the difference in the world!” With the vast planned changes and rollbacks of environmental protections from the current administration, there is no time more critical for our voices. From the Pebble Mine threat that will affect one of the world's last great salmon fisheries on Bristol Bay, to the sharp increase of logging on public lands—up 31 percent from 2017—which has negative impacts on wildlife habitat and promotes the rate of erosion; from oil and gas companies gaining access to the habitat of imperiled sage grouse across the West, to the recent Idaho Fish and Game Chinook kill fishery season



that overlaps the ESA-listed steelhead B-runs. This place, where we raise our children, where we live our lives, is under attack.

How can women banding together make a difference? By expanding our skill set as advocates, by not being afraid to take action OFTEN regardless of the outcome, by rejoicing in our victories and our failures, by expressing new perspectives and fresh ideas, by “individual effort, collectively” our voices become the megaphone for change.

We envision a place where our fish and watersheds are healthier because women are empowered to be the harbingers of cultural wisdom and science-based education, regenerative practices, and advocacy. Let's make our vision a reality. Welcome to our circle. 🐟

ABOVE

At the Bugs & Brews event in Olympia, Washington, the women of W4WF tied flies, imbibed in craft beer, and learned more about how to be effective stewards for their homewaters.

Photo: Courtesy of J Michelle Swope



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After more than sixty years, steelhead, coastal cutthroat, lamprey, Chinook and coho salmon once again have access to roughly sixteen miles of pristine habitat in Oregon's Siletz River Basin.

Photo: Conrad Gowell



RIVER STEWARDS, FELLOWS & DISTRICT COORDINATOR

DISTRICT COORDINATOR

Sanantha Kannry,
Redwood Coast

WILD FISH FELLOWS

Rowan Baker
Chris Frissell
Phillippe Gauthier
Ed Hepp
David Herasimtschuk
Ernie Nieme
Allison Oliver
Scott Schwarz
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Brice Crayne, Tautle

Chris Daughters, McKenzie
Derek Day, South Pugget Sound
Tom Derry, Molalla
Peter Donahower, Fifecornle
Creek
Dane Downing, Middle Fork &
North Fork Edl, Black Butte
Pat Dunham, John Day

Paul Engelmeier, Temmle Creek
Scotty Erens, Salmon
Ian Fergusson, Salmonberry
Paul Fortino, White Salmon
Dave Gee, Hood
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Gena Goodman-Campbell, Upper
Deschutes
Jeff Hickman, Nehalem
Todd Hيرانo, Wind
Ty Holloway, Umpqua
Paul Huston, Nisqually

Mark Homeyer, Snohomish,
Skykomish

Kellen Igon, Winchuck
Chris Johnson, Nookack
Ken Johnson, Skagit
Jim and Lauren Kerr,
Quillayute River

Jonathan Knapp, Stilligamish
Alan L'Hommedieu, Sandy
Dave Lacey, Hunter Creek
Jeremy Lees, Tualatin

Jena Lemke, Salmonberry
Steve Lent, Washougal
Bryce Levin, Snohomish
Mart Lund, Siletz

Bob Margulis, Yakima
Michael Mathis, Snake River
Lower Hell's Canyon
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Crystal McMahon, Sycan
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Tillamook Bay Rivers
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7 Mile

Marshal Moser, Williamson

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