



# STRONG RUNS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIVE FISH SOCIETY SUMMER 2005  
**FIGHTING FOR THE FUTURE OF NATIVE FISH**

## Steelhead Kelts: The Forgotten Life History

Steelhead are an anadromous or sea-going form of the rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Unlike most anadromous Pacific salmonid species (e.g., chinook, coho, pink, sockeye, and chum salmon) that only spawn once, steelhead are capable of repeated or multiple spawning events. After spawning, postspawned steelhead (referred to as "kelts") must emigrate back to the Pacific Ocean to feed and restore depleted energy reserves before attempting to spawn again. Despite this important and unique life history trait, steelhead kelts have received little attention by fisheries managers and biologists in the Pacific Northwest.

Iteroparity (the act of multiple spawning events) is believed to be an inherent life history trait that all steelhead possess. Repeat spawning rates for steelhead are highly variable, ranging from under one percent to over 50 percent, and are regulated by several biological, ecological, and anthropogenic factors. For example, steelhead that spend several months in freshwater before spawning, like summer-run steelhead, typically have lower repeat spawning rates than those that spend just a couple of months in freshwater. Similarly, populations that migrate

long distances to spawn may be less likely to repeat spawn than fish in tributaries closer to the Pacific Ocean. Of course, the number and type of barriers that impede a steelhead's migration path (hydroelectric dams, degraded habitat, etc.) negatively impact kelt survival and, ultimately, repeat spawning rates. The more pressure these anthropogenic factors exert on kelts, which includes harvest, the lower the iteroparity rate.

On average, an iteroparity rate of approximately 10 percent has been documented for steelhead populations. One might ask, however, that if only 10 percent of steelhead in a given population spawn more than once, why is this life history trait so important? In other words, does 10 percent really matter? Yes—and there are several reasons why repeat spawners are important.

First, repeat spawning steelhead are predominantly female. This skewed sex ratio results in more fertilizable eggs on the spawning grounds than is implied by a 10 percent rate.

Second, repeat spawners are larger during their second, third, or even fourth spawning run and consequently have more eggs or sperm to contribute.

Third, kelts have been subjected to

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### NEW! NFS Website Remodeled

Finally...a new Native Fish Society website is born! Go visit at [www.nativefishsociety.org](http://www.nativefishsociety.org). Visit frequently, including the new NFS Store, which will be expanded in the near future. Go to the website frequently for information about fish conservation issues and what NFS is doing on the conservation front. Learn about upcoming NFS events as they are scheduled.

Many thanks go to Portland Networks ([www.portlandnetworks.com](http://www.portlandnetworks.com)), who created the website at a fraction of the actual costs, demonstrating their commitment to preserving and restoring native fish runs.

**Native Fish Society**  
[www.nativefishsociety.org](http://www.nativefishsociety.org)

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Reconditioning is the process of capturing and temporarily feeding kelts so that they survive, grow, and ultimately develop mature gonads to spawn again.

The protection and recognition of kelts should be an integral component of steelhead restoration plans.

one or more life-cycles of natural selection pressure. In fact, you might consider kelts to be the "best-of-the-best" because these fish have the genetic material to survive in today's altered rivers and streams.

Fourth, perseveration of iteroparity ensures that life history diversity, a central and integral component of any healthy stock, is preserved. For example, iteroparity can be viewed as a safeguard against catastrophic failure of the spawning run because genetic material is preserved in the repeat spawners. This may happen when repeat spawners skip a spawning year before returning to spawn a second time, thereby contributing genetic material over the course of several years. Finally, repeat spawners may help maintain genetic diversity by allowing different year classes of spawning fish to mix.

Data collected from several steelhead populations in the Columbia River Basin suggests that the majority of steelhead that successfully spawn once attempt emigration to the Pacific as kelts. Similar to smolts, kelts in the Columbia River Basin and elsewhere undergo a mass migration from their natal streams to the ocean each spring. Unfortunately, data from these same studies indicate that only a small fraction of the kelts—especially those from impounded sections of the Snake and Upper Columbia rivers—survive the journey back to the ocean. Researchers and managers are exploring ways to aid kelts during downstream migration in the Columbia River. Studies have been conducted to investigate how kelts navigate the hydrosystem and have examined innovative ways to increase kelt survival through kelt reconditioning. Reconditioning is the process of capturing and temporarily feeding kelts so that they survive, grow, and ultimately develop mature gonads to spawn again.

Public awareness is another way in which kelts can be aided. For example, anglers should avoid fishing for steelhead during the kelt run, primarily February to May for many but not all Columbia Basin populations. This is because kelts may be more susceptible to angling pressure than prespawn steelhead. Following spawning, kelts are in an atrophied physiological state and unlike prespawn steelhead, kelts must reinitiate feeding if they are to survive to spawn again. As such,

kelts may be more likely to grab a lure or fly and less likely to survive an angling incident following release.

Conscientious anglers know to avoid fishing on or near steelhead redds, but many anglers are unaware that hundreds or even thousands of kelts are migrating downstream each spring. This lack of awareness may be compounded by the fact that many kelts brighten up following spawning in preparation to reenter the saltwater environment, a morphological change that makes the kelt look more like a giant smolt than a richly colored prespawn steelhead. Of course, determining when or if to minimize fishing pressure to protect wild kelts will require some knowledge about the local kelt run and perhaps even regulations that are river or stream specific. Nonetheless, kelts should be allowed to return to the ocean unimpeded, thereby having a greater opportunity to return as repeat spawners.

Interested and concerned anglers should ask their local fisheries biologist when native steelhead spawn in the rivers and streams they fish. Kelts, especially female kelts, are believed to leave the spawning grounds soon after spawning but some may mill around in larger pools or calm stretches before actively exiting the river.

Finally, advocates of wild steelhead need to support and ask regional managers to fund more research on steelhead kelts and repeat spawners. Although recent studies have collected some baseline data on kelts in the Columbia River, more research is needed before managers can effectively enhance iteroparity. Furthermore, very little research has been conducted on kelts outside of the mainstem Columbia and Snake rivers. Regardless of the need for more research, the protection and recognition of kelts should be an integral component of steelhead restoration plans. This is because addressing kelt research and management needs will help tackle a question central to steelhead restoration: how to rebuild natural populations in ways that preserve their genetic and life history diversity.

**Allen Evans**

**Editor's Note:** Allen Evans is a researcher with Real Time Research in Bend, Oregon. A list of references for this article is posted on the Native Fish website, [www.nativefishsociety.org](http://www.nativefishsociety.org).

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# Legislative Update: May 2005

## Executive Appointments

This session has seen a continuation of the Governor's erratic track record on executive appointments. Perhaps the most notable example of the awkward process was the last minute failure of former Congressman Les AuCoin's nomination to the Board of Forestry—a communications breakdown between the Governor and Senate leadership doomed his appointment.

NFS is pleased that Zane Smith has been reappointed to the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission. NFS is awaiting word regarding an expected vacancy for Don Denman's seat, which expires in July.

## 2005-2007 Budget

The budget continues to occupy legislator's time as well as news headlines. School spending has been the primary source of disagreement between both parties. The House and Senate have formed separate budget committees; a conference committee will iron out differences. For now it appears the House is proposing to trim natural resource budgets to make up for a compromise spending bill.

This situation does not bode well for our efforts to eliminate or reduce the State's reliance on M66 and Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Funds to support natural resource agency budgets. NFS presented testimony opposing the backfill of agency budgets. Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board funds are constitutionally mandated for watershed recovery programs, including watershed council funding and project implementation.

Chris Winter of Cascade Resource Advocacy Group presented a critique of a new draft Attorney General's Opinion questioning the AG's guarded suggestions that backfilling could be legal. The opinion is now three years in the making, and the AG is struggling with the issue. It is NFS position that backfilling of agency budgets is unconstitutional and therefore unlawful.

We have worked diligently to educate legislators about the M66 issue, but an assortment of interests have been working to undermine our efforts. Clearly, salmon recovery will continue to be substantially inhibited until this issue is resolved.

## Oregon Forest Coalition

A coalition of conservation organizations have come together for the purpose of reforming management on state owned forest lands. In addition, Federal roadless areas are now subject to the whims of the Oregon Board of Forestry as a result of agreements made by the Governor in response to new rules handed down by the Bush Administration. Management of these lands could have a profound effect on native fish populations so we are working to prevent timber industry representatives from having their way.

The timber industry appears to be mounting an all out attack on public land management, the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act and other important laws, regulations and policies. Native Fish Society is meeting regularly with the coalition to ensure the integrity of habitat essential for native fish and their habitats.

## Current Bill Tracking

**SB 473, wild fish management policy.** This bill is yet another "fish-is-a-fish" incarnation, which would declare hatchery fish and wild fish as being the same. The bill not received a hearing and is likely dead.

**HB 2779 establishes a warm water angling tag.** The bill has not yet passed out of the Ways and Means Committee, but, if it does, NFS will oppose the bill in the House. NFS is on record advocating for a review of the warm water fish management plan prior to considering any new programs or fees.

**SB345, permanent reserves of forest lands.** The timber industry and counties turned out in force to oppose this bill, which would have provided substantial protection for fish on state owned forests. A recently released study by the Department of Forestry lends credence to the need for reserves; NFS will work with others to establish suitable fish protection measures.

**HB 3038, municipal water right permit extensions.** The bill would grant unlimited time extensions to municipalities for development of water supplies with no regard for current environmental considerations. The bill is currently before the Senate Environment and Land Use Committee.

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**SB 532, Water Quality.** Prohibits Environmental Quality Commission from establishing water quality standards that are less stringent than standards previously established. Amendments to this bill could place demands on M66 funding which NFS cannot support.

**HJM 28, forest lands covered under the NW Forest Plan,** asks the Federal Govt. to more than double logging. The bill has not received a hearing.

**SB 1028, public use of certain waterways.** All 30 people on both sides of the navigability issue who testified before the Senate Rules Committee on May 16 opposed this bill, a poorly conceived "solution" to the navigability question that runs afoul of a recent Attorney General Opinion. Senators Brown and Ferrioli appear intent on moving the bill regard-

less of public opinion. This bill includes new fees for boating.

**HB 5074/75, OWEB budget bill.** The appropriations bill that is being used to backfill state agency budgets with approximately \$25 million in dollars earmarked for salmon and watershed recovery. The Governor's recommended budget also provides for the use of roughly \$10 million in Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Funds for the same purpose. The Department of Commerce has advised the Governor that the Federal funds will be withheld if used as such.

For additional information feel free to contact Les Helgeson at (503) 398-5965. E-mail: greenhills@oregoncoast.com.

The address for the Oregon Legislature is: [www.leg.state.or.us/index.html](http://www.leg.state.or.us/index.html).

**Les Helgeson**

## Legislature Steals Fish Funds

The Oregon legislature and the Governor have been stealing funding intended for salmon to backfill agency budgets. The Native Fish Society has worked to solve this problem by encouraging the lawmakers to follow the law. NFS attorney Chris Winter's testimony before the Joint Ways and Means Committee on Natural Resources, in summary:

The Native Fish Society believes that the proposed appropriations of nearly \$15 million from the Watershed Improvement Operating Fund and \$10 million from the Watershed Improvement Grant Fund would violate the Oregon Constitution as well as the Oregon Revised Statutes that established OWEB and its watershed granting program. The people of Oregon passed Measure 66 in 1998 and established that 15% of the net proceeds from the Oregon lottery are to be placed into a Parks and Natural Resources Fund. Of that 15%, half is to be used on state parks while the other half (the Restoration and Protection Sub-account) is to be used to "finance the restoration and protection of native salmonid populations, watersheds, fish and wildlife habitats and water quality in Oregon."

Measure 66 specifically stated that the money for salmon and watershed protection "shall be administered by one state agency." Adhering to the will of the

people, the Oregon Legislature established OWEB as the administering agency and created the granting program as the means for distributing the lottery funds.

The legislature now threatens to contradict and undermine this system by diverting funds from OWEB's grants program. Instead of entrusting the decision on allocation of money to OWEB, the legislature proposes to use this money to backfill the budgets of various state agencies. Instead of providing local watershed groups the opportunity to use this money for on-the-ground restoration efforts, the legislature wants to allocate a large majority of money to existing programs within separate state agencies. This decision undermines the Oregon Plan for Salmon.

The Attorney General has released a draft opinion that appears to justify the proposed bill. The Attorney General's draft opinion contradicts the plain meaning of the language of Measure 66. The constitutional language does not create two separate categories of money as suggested by the Draft Opinion—one category to be allocated by the legislature, and one category to be allocated by the agency.

The Native Fish Society is extremely concerned that the backfilling of state agency budgets with Measure 66 money threatens to undermine the effectiveness of the Oregon Plan.

For a complete copy of Chris Winter's testimony and updated legislative information, visit the Native Fish website: [www.nativefishsociety.org](http://www.nativefishsociety.org).

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# First Annual Lake Fishing Tournament a Big Success

April 30 and May 1-2 marked the dates of the first ever—and now annual—Native Fish Society Desert Lake Fishing Tournament. The tournament was hosted by John Smeraglio and the Deschutes Canyon Fly Shop and Jeff DuPont and the Wild Winds Ranch and was held at the ranch, which is located just outside of Grass Valley.

The venue for the tournament was five small but productive lakes that are home to Kamloops trout that range from 10 inches to a whopping 30 inches in length. Ten contestants paid \$650 each to fish in teams of two during the three-day event.



*Julia Roether and Frank Bryant display Julia's 23-inch trout, which came close to making theirs the winning team.*

One point was awarded for every inch of fish landed by contestants. Each lake fished differently, some well at some times, one not so well any time. The teams of two rotated between the lakes, fishing each lake at least once during the event.

Teams were: Frank Bryant and Julia Roether; John Hurd and Mike Aveni; Paul Franklin and Dick Bushnell; Dale Madden and Bud Haxby; and Bruce Hampton and Mike "Shakey" Owens. Bill Bakke, Dick Kennon, Frank Kay, and John Smeraglio served as judges and

were responsible for penalizing contestants who fudged on very stringent rules.

Contestants stayed in the comfortable ranch house at Wild Winds where meals were prepared and served by Jeff DuPont and his fine staff. Meals were hearty and included complimentary wine and beer. Refreshment stations were placed strategically around the lake

so that contestants could enjoy a beer, soft drink or water when and wherever they wanted.

All contestants caught fish, using a variety of techniques, and each landed fish in excess of 20 inches with some of the fish taken approaching 25 inches. The event was won by John Hurd and Mike Aveni, who eked out total inches just slightly above the total of Team Julia Roether and Frank Bryant. There was some controversy associated with Team Hurd and Aveni, with charges leveled that Aveni was a ringer imported from the top-rated Polish National Lake Fishing Team, though the charges were never confirmed. Team Roether and Bryant came from way back the last day of the event, owing largely to Roether's landing several big fish, including one that measured 23 inches. Third place was won by Bruce Hampton and Shakey Owens. First, second and third place winners were awarded commemorative plaques and prizes donated for the event.

"Everyone had a great time, caught fish, ate well and got into the spirit of the event, and we raised money for the Native Fish Society," said co-sponsor John Smeraglio.

Plans are already underway to hold the second annual event at Wild Winds Ranch in May, 2006.



*John Hurd and Mike Aveni, proud winners of the First Annual NFS Lake Fishing Tournament.*

**Paul Franklin**

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## Native Fish Society and WaterWatch Honored at Southern Oregon Event

...the two organizations work to protect habitat for native fish.

The theme *For Fish and Rivers* set the tone for an evening honoring the Native Fish Society and WaterWatch of Oregon at the historic Ashland Springs Hotel in Ashland, Thursday, May 5. The event was the brainchild of Ken Morrish and Brian Giese, partners and operators of Fly Water Travel, a southern Oregon company that plans fly fishing adventures to exotic locations throughout the world.

Morrish, Giese and local physician and supporter Dr. Bryan Sohl hatched the idea of holding a free event in southern Oregon to feature the efforts of both the Native Fish Society and WaterWatch in protecting the fish and rivers of the area. The three are highly visible in fish and conservation circles in southern Oregon and underwrote the costs for the evening to demonstrate their support for two organizations they believe important to the protection of the fish and water resources in their area.

Over 60 people attended the event, enjoyed local wines and finger foods, and participated in a Silent Auction held to raise money for NFS and WaterWatch. Former Congressman and NFS member Les AuCoin was the master of ceremonies and introduced both organizations to those in attendance and asked that people show their concern and support for the rivers and fish of southern Oregon by making a joint pledge to NFS and WaterWatch.

NFS executive director Bill Bakke and NFS board member and Medford resident Peter Tronquet both spoke about the NFS agenda in southern Oregon. Tronquet highlighted his ground-breaking work in developing a Native Fish Conservation Plan for the Rogue River.

WaterWatch executive director John DeVoe and local WaterWatch staffer Bob Hunter spoke on behalf of WaterWatch. In addition to his other efforts on behalf of the rivers and fish, Hunter has led the local fight to eliminate the Savage Rapids Dam on the Rogue.

"As far as I know, this event was the first time that two conservation groups have ever come together to tell their stories and raise monies in a single public event," commented Bill Bakke.

"We are very pleased that Ken Morrish, Brian Giese and Bryan Sohl had the insight and provided the leadership to make this event happen. We certainly hope to do other joint events with WaterWatch in the future," added Bakke.

Dubbed a success by all involved, the event raised over \$11,500 with the net proceeds to be split evenly between The Native Fish Society and WaterWatch of Oregon.

Plans are already underway to hold the event again next spring in southern Oregon. NFS and WaterWatch are discussing other possible joint ventures and activities as the two organizations work to protect habitat for native fish.

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## Anne Tattam Joins NFS Staff



Anne Tattam joined the NFS staff as a part-time administrative assistant in April. A June 2004 graduate of the University of Oregon, Anne is a long time member and supporter of NFS and is the daughter of supporters and members Bill and Sara Tattam.

Anne is providing administrative support in membership and fundraising and is also assisting Executive Director Bill Bakke in background and research work to support NFS' fish conservation efforts.

Anne will also play a central role in keeping NFS' new website fresh and up to date with the latest information about fish conservation issues, NFS efforts and upcoming events and activities. Anne brings an inquisitive mind, a willingness to do virtually anything it takes, and a great commitment to native fish to the job.

We are pleased to have Anne working with NFS and hope to be able to expand her responsibilities in the near future. Contact Anne at the NFS office: (503) 977-3133.

**Paul Franklin, Director**

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# Conservation Report

This report is a summary of Bill Bakke's full report. To see details, please visit our new website: [www.native-fishsociety.org](http://www.native-fishsociety.org).

## **Sand Lake Estuary Saved For Now:**

A hard fought battle by local conservationists, including NFS's Les Helgeson, has defeated Sand Lake Golf Course—for now. The Sand Lake Estuary is one of only two major estuaries designated "natural" by the State of Oregon.

This is awesome news, but there may be some other kind of development plan in the works for this prime piece of property which Frank Bastasch originally bought to develop. Be prepared: see [www.oregonwaters.org/sandlake.htm](http://www.oregonwaters.org/sandlake.htm) for up-to-date information.

## **A Prudent Manager Saves All the**

**Parts:** The scientists on the Independent Science Advisory Board (ISAB) firmly advise NMFS against losing populations of wild native fish in an Evolutionarily Significant Unit (ESU). The ISAB frowns on nixing any wild populations and in doing so being able to call the ESU healthy and recovered. Read the ISAB report at: [www.nwppc.org/library/isab/isab2005-2.htm](http://www.nwppc.org/library/isab/isab2005-2.htm)

## **How Many Wild Spring Chinook?**

How many wild spring chinook have passed Bonneville Dam this spring? There is no count for wild spring chinook passing Bonneville Dam. If there is one, it is kept by each state fish agency, which means that there is no regional coordination for wild spring chinook monitoring for the Columbia Basin. How can the fish management agencies construct a recovery program when they do not know how many wild chinook are in the run? How do they

calculate the number of fish they permit to be killed as part of the incidental catch?

This is yet another example where politics, professional judgment, and conventional wisdom, held so dearly by the fish managers, dominates fish management, if it can be called that.

## **Federal Judge Rejects Bush Salmon**

**Plan:** Judge Jim Redden rejected the NOAA Fisheries Salmon Plan for the second time. Redden rejected the 2000 BiOp and remanded it to NOAA Fisheries to fix, but what he got back was worse, so now he has rejected the 2004 BiOp because it fails to protect salmon and steelhead while making the commitment to spend \$600 million.

Why is this important? NOAA Fisheries and its partners have tried to slip by federal law by basing their assessment of jeopardy only on whether a species' chances of survival were appreciably reduced by the action of a federal agency. In framing their evaluation in this way, they are actively trying to circumvent the ESA which requires them to also evaluate whether the action may impede recovery. An action may impede recovery but not jeopardize survival.

Judge Redden's decision applies the recovery standard to the jeopardy analysis in a biological opinion as well as to critical habitat determinations. He says, "*Recovery must be considered separately.*" So from now on, all federal actions must be evaluated for their affect on recovery and survival of the listed species. It will be more difficult for NOAA Fisheries to agree with the states the next time there is a proposal to increase the risk to a listed species in decisions, including har-

*(continued on page 8)*

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## Joyce Sherman Takes Over *Strong Runs*

Joyce Sherman, one of the strongest and most familiar voices in the Northwest fish circles, recently has taken over as editor of *Strong Runs*, the Native Fish Society's quarterly newsletter. Joyce and Marty Sherman own River Graphics, a Portland graphic design and marketing firm. Joyce brings over 40 years of design and writing experience to NFS and the newsletter.

"We're very pleased to have Joyce join us as newsletter editor," said Bill Bakke, executive director of NFS. "She knows the history and the issues of the day when it comes to protecting native fish and is intimately involved in the fight. It seems only natural to have Joyce taking over as the editor of the NFS newsletter."

**Paul Franklin, Director**

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**NATIVE FISH  
SOCIETY****Fighting for the  
Future of  
Native Fish**

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**Conservation Report, from page 7**

vest, because if it impedes recovery of the species it cannot be allowed. But wait, I predict that they will try and they may be successful since by the time they are taken to court, the fishery will be over and the damage will have been done.

**How Warm is the Sea?** The North Pacific Ocean was warmest on record in 2004. Sea surface temperatures were warmer by a degree than during the strong El Nino of 1997. Many subtropical ocean species were found in the waters off

B.C. with some never having been seen before north of San Diego, California. The number and diversity of subtropical species found tend to occur during strong El Nino events.

We read about the depleted oxygen in the ocean near Yachats, Oregon last year and the fish kill associated with it. Frank Whitney, of the Institute of Oceans and Sciences, notes: "One of the strongest trends...is for oxygen to decrease and nutrients to increase in subsurface waters."

**Bill Bakke, Director**

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**Spey Casting Secrets Now Available on DVD**

Due to many requests, *Spey Casting Secrets* is now available in DVD format, complete with chapters and sections. The new format allows all the features of DVD—from freeze framing to selecting the sections and segments you want to watch and study.

This highly popular video was filmed at the Sandy River Spey Clave by Mark Bachmann and Jeff Runner and made available to The Native Fish Society to help support our conservation efforts.

The new DVD includes Spey casting tips, lessons, strategies, secrets, and techniques offered up by 10 of the world's best Spey casters. Among those featured are world renowned casters Simon Gawesworth, Steve Choate, Dr. Way Yin, and Andy Murray.

The DVD version retails for \$34.95. NFS members receive a 30% discount off the retail price—\$24.75 net. To order your copy, call Anne Tattam at 503-977-3133 or e-mail her at [anne@nativefishsociety.org](mailto:anne@nativefishsociety.org).



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