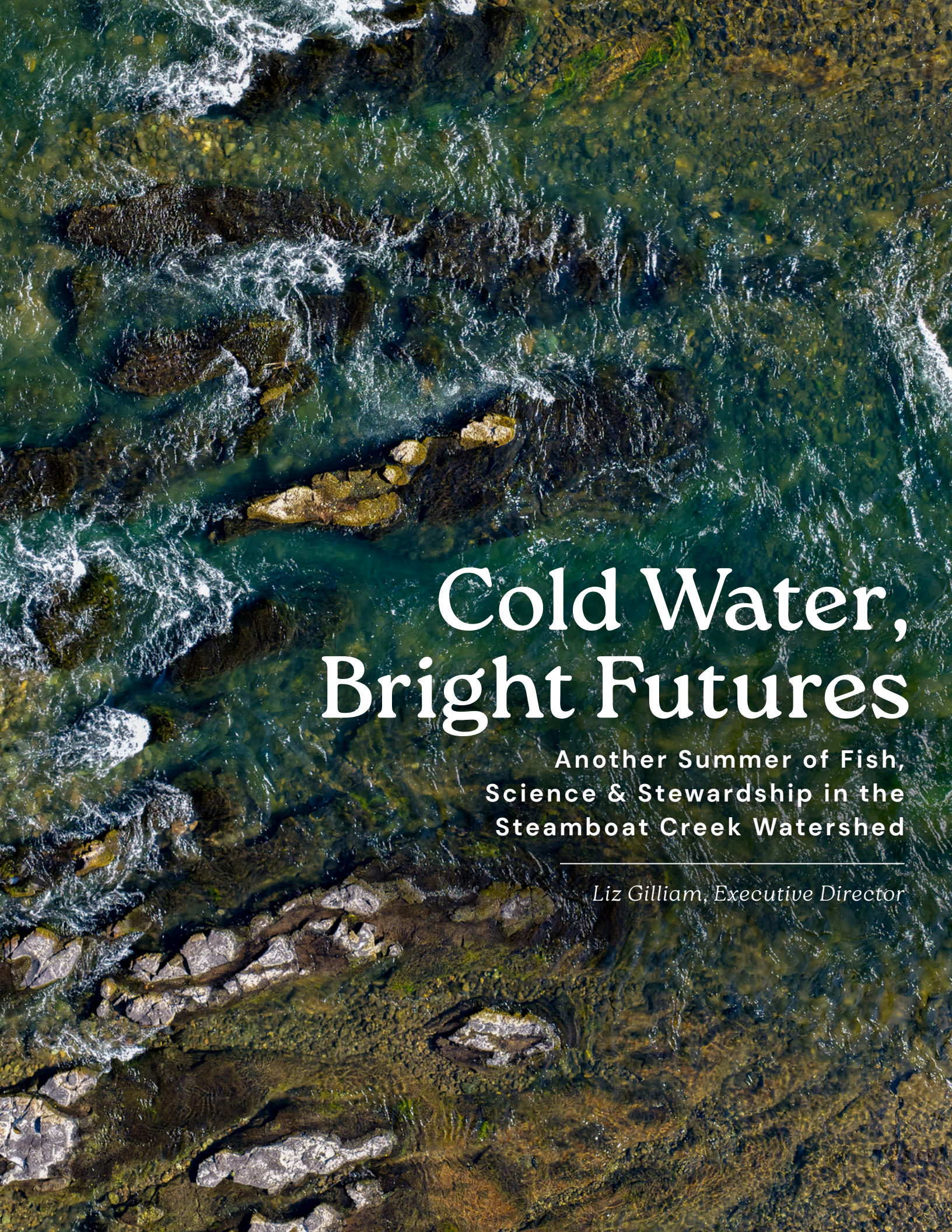


An aerial photograph of a river with white water rapids flowing over dark, mossy rocks. The water is a deep green color, and the rapids create white foam. The rocks are dark and textured, with some moss visible. The overall scene is dynamic and natural.

Cold Water, Bright Futures

Another Summer of Fish,
Science & Stewardship in the
Steamboat Creek Watershed

Liz Gilliam, Executive Director



Picture this: a teenager from Glide surfaces from the cold, clear water of Steamboat Creek, mask pushed up on her forehead, sputtering a little — and then grinning so wide you can see it from the bank. She just counted a juvenile steelhead tucked behind a rock in water barely two feet deep. She'd grown up around creeks just like this and never knew that was happening underneath — she'd never looked at her home river this way before.

Now below the water, picture this: a caddisfly larvae holding onto a large piece of gravel in swift current, a Pacific giant salamander lurking in the eddy of a boulder, and as you look ahead, underneath a large tree fallen over on the creek bed, is a small steelhead nursery — with a bunch of 1-inch juvenile fish under the cover of the sticks and branches from the log. It's bright, it's quiet, and there is activity everywhere. "It's a whole new world under the water!"

This is exactly what our student snorkelers experienced over two weeks this summer as they collected fish distribution and abundance data in the Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Sanctuary.

This summer, Pacific Rivers was back in the Steamboat watershed doing what we've been doing since 2011: snorkel surveys of juvenile salmonids in the creeks and tributaries of the Steamboat basin. It's a long-running, rigorous biological monitoring program that has produced valuable long-term datasets. But of added importance is the collaboration with our next generation of scientists. This year, a crew of about 13 young people from the Wolf Creek Job Corps in Glide, Oregon was wading in with us, getting paid for their efforts, getting trained, and getting their minds a little bit blown. *If you've ever snorkeled in our streams or rivers, you know exactly what I mean.*

The Program, Briefly

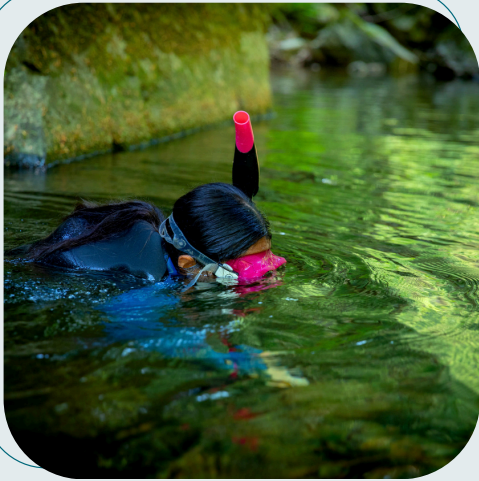
The surveys themselves have a straightforward purpose: our team swims a consistent set of reaches on Steamboat Creek and its tributaries, counting juvenile Chinook, coho, and steelhead by species and age class, measuring habitat conditions, and recording what they find. We have used the same methods since 2011. The consistency is what makes this data powerful. In Canton Creek (Steamboat's major tributary), we now have 20-plus years of comparable observations, at the same sites, using the same methods, and with the same timing — that's rare. That's a dataset that can actually tell you something about how fish populations respond to drought years, to warming water, to wildfire, to storms, and to the slow creep of climate change in a watershed. The information feeds into broader conservation work in the basin.

Dr. Charley Dewberry, a watershed ecologist who has led this program from the very start, oversees the training, the field implementation, and the quality control that keeps the data meaningful. Our dive crew leads bring that same rigorous, quietly dedicated energy to the water every day. They also happen to love working with the students, which is awesome.

Our professional biologists spent two full months surveying every stretch of creek in the Steamboat and Canton Creek basins that are deep enough to put a snorkel mask into. The snorkel surveys produce data that helps to protect this important steelhead nursery. But the youth program is planting seeds for our future.



The Next Generation of River Stewards



The students are already learning practical trades and building futures for themselves at the Job Corps campus. This year's group of students are pursuing a track focused on natural resources at the school.

It's one thing to experience a creek from the bank – *getting into the water with a mask and snorkel and actually seeing the thriving underwater world is something else entirely.* And getting paid to do science alongside professional biologists, understanding how the data they're collecting connects to real management decisions on federal lands — that's the kind of experience that can open a door that a lot of these young people didn't know existed. Dr. Dewberry started the snorkel season with a full day of instruction about fish ecology, life history, and the conservation value of these homewaters that sets the students up for two weeks underwater. Following the surveys, we continue to work with the students, provide mentorship and present the results to the local community.



Why This All Matters for Steamboat Creek

Working alongside professional fisheries biologists, students learn how to identify juvenile fish, estimate habitat, record observations with care, and understand why consistency matters in long-term monitoring.

The work is physically demanding.

Students hike into remote reaches carrying gear, spend hours in cold water, and finish each day comparing notes with experienced scientists to ensure the highest quality data. The professional

biologists spend an additional six weeks covering the remainder of the Steamboat basin, including Canton Creek.

The North Umpqua watershed, and Steamboat Creek in particular, supports wild runs of native fish – a vital stronghold in the region. The Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Sanctuary – which Pacific Rivers helped establish – protects the heart of this system.



This year's Steamboat snorkel surveys were led once again by Dr. Charley Dewberry and managed by Pacific Rivers Project Manager Liz Gilliam. To learn more about the program or support Pacific Rivers' work on the North Umpqua, visit www.pacificrivers.org.

Photography by Adam Spencer

A Note on Funding

We want to be transparent with you: federal funding that previously supported this program is no longer available. Funding for direct costs of this year's program – including professional planning, oversight and analysis, as well as equipment and compensation for our student team – was graciously provided by the Roundhouse Foundation, the National Forest Foundation's Matching Awards Program, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.



Oregon Department of
Fish & Wildlife



National Forest Foundation
*This institution is an equal
opportunity employer.*



The Roundhouse
Foundation

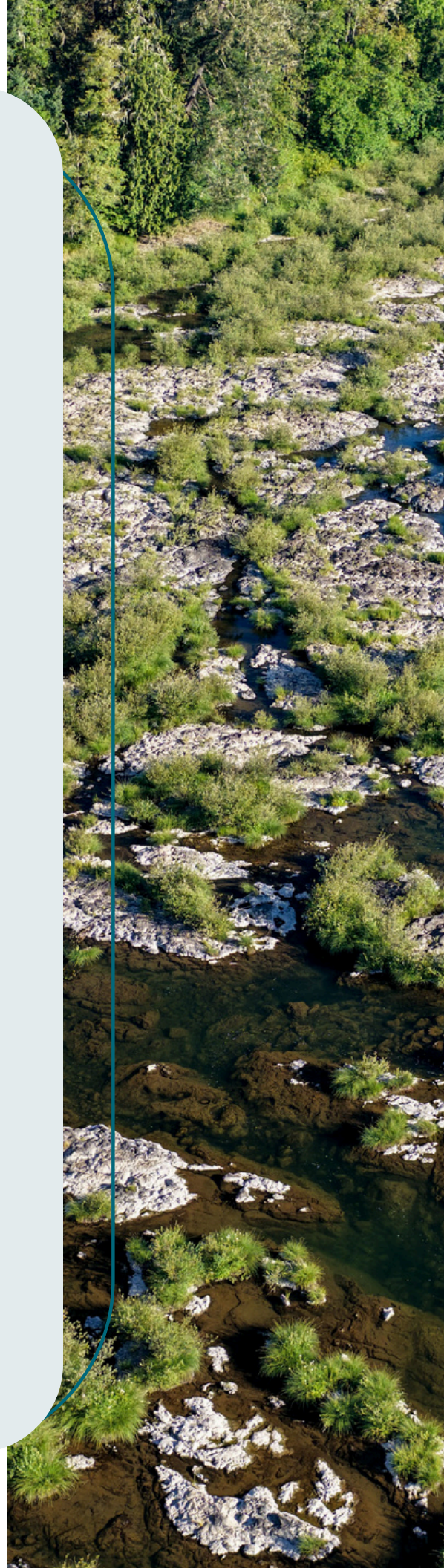
Programs like this require much additional work on the part of our core team. Year in and year out, that work is made possible by the gifts of individual donors like you. Thank you! Please consider a year-end gift to Pacific Rivers to support continued growth in our conservation work and results.

What's Next

In the meantime — we'll be in the water and we'll be advocating for the fish. Keep an eye out for footage we collected from the field and stories from the students — in their voices.

You can watch "Pass Creek Revisited", a new film about decades of advocacy work in the North Umpqua, produced by Pacific Rivers, Steamboaters, and The North Umpqua Foundation, at vimeo.com/pacificrivers.

And you can find our monitoring reports on our website.







PACIFICRIVERS.ORG

1001 SE Water Avenue, Suite 450

Portland, OR 97214

info@pacificrivers.org