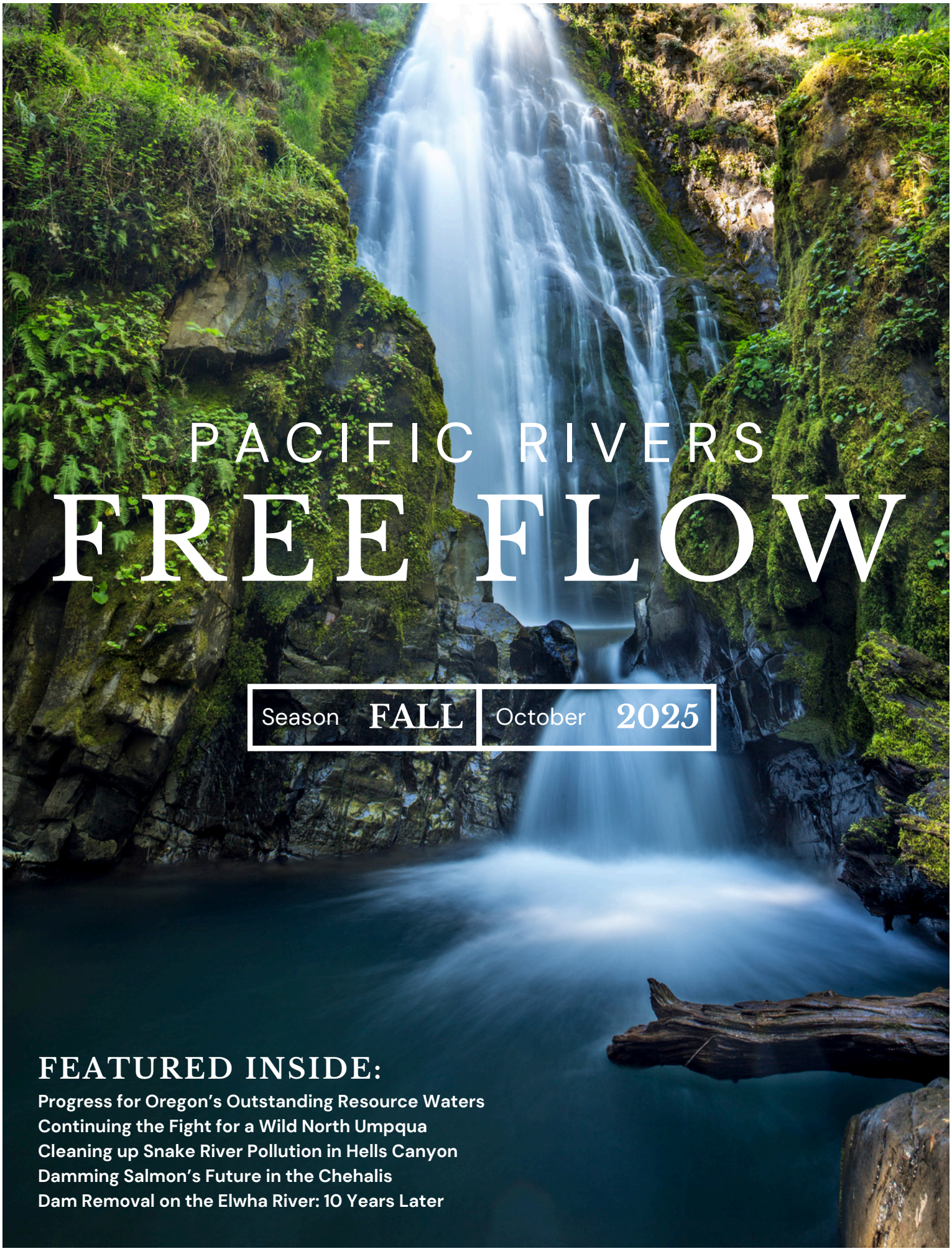


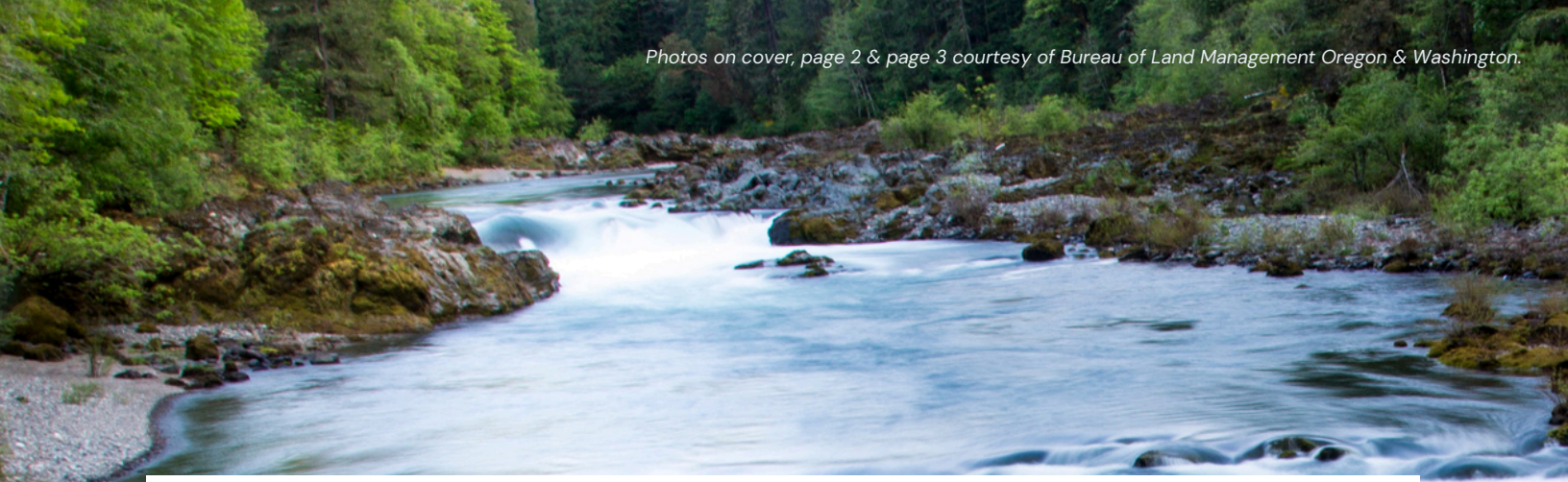
PACIFIC RIVERS

FREE FLOW

Season	FALL	October	2025

FEATURED INSIDE:

Progress for Oregon's Outstanding Resource Waters
Continuing the Fight for a Wild North Umpqua
Cleaning up Snake River Pollution in Hells Canyon
Damming Salmon's Future in the Chehalis
Dam Removal on the Elwha River: 10 Years Later



Photos on cover, page 2 & page 3 courtesy of Bureau of Land Management Oregon & Washington.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Board Chair 3

Program Updates

Oregon Outstanding Waters: Illinois River, Rough & Ready Creek, and Steamboat Creek 4

North Umpqua: Resilience, Renewal, and the Fight for Wild Rivers .. 7

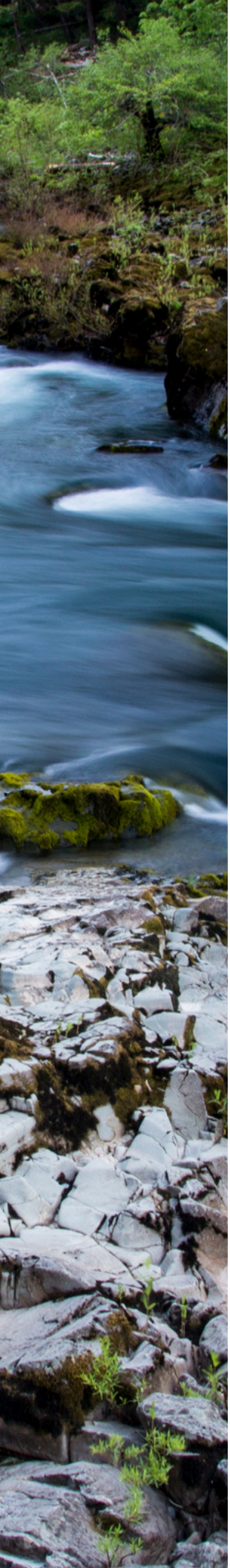
Short-Term Fix, Long-Term Loss: The Costly Chehalis Dam 12

Making Hells Canyon Fish Safe to Eat for All: Problems, Solutions, and Next Steps 15

Elwha Reborn: Ten Years After Dam Removal, Looking to the Future ... 20

Many Thanks to Aanchal Vidyarthi 26

Remembering Jim Van Loan 27



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Mike Morrison - Board Chair

Thank you for your support that makes this newsletter and, indeed, all we do possible. In this issue, we report on our current conservation priorities and provide information and insights that we hope deepen your understanding of watersheds around the region. We also pay tribute to Jim Van Loan, river advocate extraordinaire and former member of the Pacific Rivers board, who recently passed away.

Pacific Rivers has long had a particular interest in the health of the North Umpqua River. Liz Gilliam has contributed a deep dive into the status of that work in this issue. Liz is uniquely qualified to draft this review as she, along with Dr. Charley Dewberry, compiled the temperature study of the Steamboat Creek basin as our first major step towards a collective and collaborative effort to create a Management Plan for the Frank and Jeanne Moore SMU (wild steelhead sanctuary). We hope this update answers some questions, provides some new insights, and spurs your interest and advocacy for this unique and critical watershed. *The Future of the Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Sanctuary* report is available on our website under "Reports" in the "Learn More" tab.

Recently we have had the good fortune to work with two very talented interns, Nick Basaraba and Aanchal Vidyarthi. Nick first sought us out at the suggestion of board member Kate Crump, with whom he had recently worked at the lodge she operates in Alaska with her husband Justin. A student at Colorado State working toward a journalism degree, he has assisted us this year with research, writing and photography. In this issue of *Free Flow* he explores the physical and biological results from the removal of two dams more than a decade ago on Washington's Elwha River. The earliest dam removal project of its scale in history up to that point, it now provides the longest post-removal period of record. Nick's article offers lessons learned to date, trends to track going forward, and new questions to explore.

Aanchal is a recent graduate of Oregon State University with a degree in Chemical Engineering. She will begin her post-graduate work this fall at New York University in Environmental Science with a focus on Environmental Economics and Policy. Early this year she contacted us to offer her time and skills this spring and summer. She spent the bulk of her time with us on a research project to help Northwest watershed advocates secure the full protection of the Clean Water Act for their streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands and estuaries. The key – now more than ever – is working effectively with our state agencies that have the lead responsibility for setting water quality standards and developing programs to ensure they are met. The article on Aanchal in this issue provides more information about her project, which we will build on in the months ahead. Stay tuned.

We have a couple of events lined up for this fall:

- Watersheds & Wine fund + friend-raiser gathering at Sweet Cheeks Winery in Eugene, OR on October 23rd
- "The Grand Salmon" film screening at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, in partnership with Save Our wild Salmon on November 6th

Further information on these events and more can be found on our website under "Events".

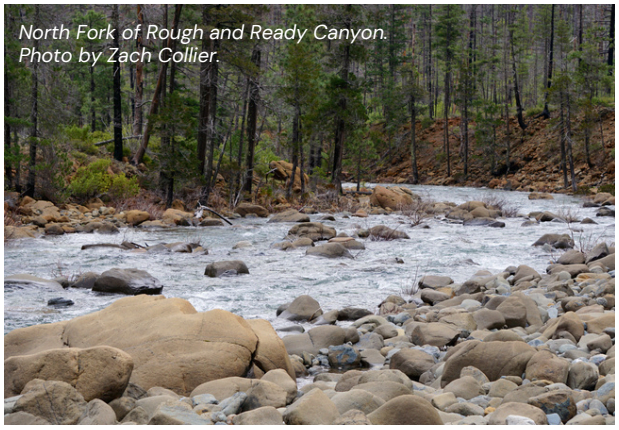
In closing, I thank all of those who participated in our board match fundraising campaign last spring. Our board members collectively pledged to match up to $10,000 – and you rose to meet and exceed the challenge. I also thank our board members, other volunteers, advisors, monthly donors, annual donors and all the many others who make our work on behalf of our rivers possible.

Mike

Mike Morrison



Steamboat Creek.
Photo by Mark Conlin.



North Fork of Rough and Ready Canyon.
Photo by Zach Collier.



Illinois River's stunning turquoise waters.
Photo by Zach Collier.

PROGRAM UPDATE:

OREGON OUTSTANDING WATERS

Illinois River and Rough and Ready Creek nominations move ahead; Steamboat Creek remains in the queue for now



As we go to print, we have some good news and some great news to report. First, the great news.

The Illinois River and Rough and Ready Creek are on track to become Oregon's next Outstanding Resource Waters next year.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) has included in its three-year workplan the rulemaking process for designation of both as Outstanding Resource Waters (ORWs). Along with our coalition partners, we strongly supported the nominations of both in the public comment period last fall and before the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission (OEQC) this spring. The Department's decision to move forward with these two highly qualified waters for their urgently needed protection is most welcome news, worthy of celebration and support. Please stay tuned for updates and alerts about how you can help as we approach the public comment period next year.

For detailed background on our ORW work and the Illinois River, see the Fall 2024 issue of "Free Flow" on our website with articles about:

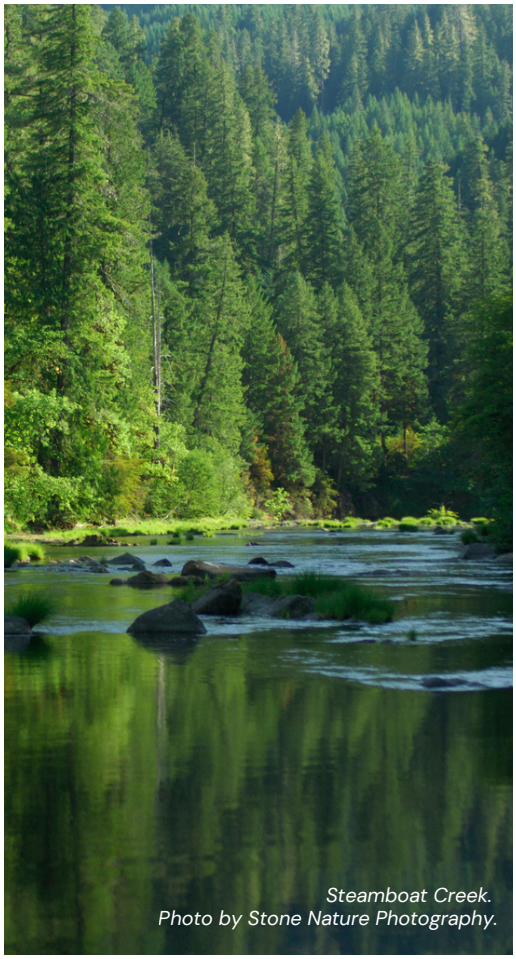
- *What ORWs are and why we need more of them in the Northwest*
- *Examples of ORW programs in other states around the country*
- *The first Northwest ORWs designated in Oregon and Washington*
- *Formal petitions by Pacific Rivers and our coalition partners for the Illinois River and Steamboat Creek*

For the formal nominations on the Illinois and Rough and Ready, see ODEQ's Triennial Review website. Links are provided on page 6.

Now, for the good news. ***Our coalition's ORW petition for Steamboat Creek – the critically important tributary of the North Umpqua River – is alive, well, and fit for action by ODEQ.***

Frankly, we were surprised and disappointed when ODEQ chose not to include Steamboat's designation process in its three-year workplan. Our coalition's Steamboat petition enjoyed very strong support:

- There were four lead petitioners: American Rivers, Pacific Rivers, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and Trout Unlimited.
- Eight letters of support were included in Appendix A of the petition itself. They came from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Cow Creek Band of the Umpqua Tribe of Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, Umpqua Watersheds, Steamboaters, The Conservation Angler, Native Fish Society, and The North Umpqua Foundation.
- Fifteen additional comments in support were provided during the Triennial Review public comment period: They came from US EPA, The Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Pacific Rivers, Friends of the Corvallis Watershed, Oregon Sierra Club, Water Climate Trust & Oregon Water Justice Alliance, The Pew Charitable Trusts, Melissa Jones, Wild Salmon Center, Steamboaters, The North Umpqua Foundation, Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center, Watershed Decisions, and American Rivers.



Steamboat Creek. Photo by Stone Nature Photography.

There was a single letter that was not in strong support of Steamboat Creek. It came from the U.S. Forest Service. It did not dispute Steamboat Creek's ORW qualifications, but it did urge de-prioritization of Steamboat's ORW designation in the next three years, mainly because of

1. Belief that existing federal rules for protection of the Steamboat watershed are sufficient; and
2. Concern about additional state regulation that might impede collaborative restoration work.

We believe those concerns were unfounded. We are working to address them now. Our position remains that

1. Existing federal rules for protection of Steamboat Creek are not sufficient, because they do not set a clear Clean Water Act non-degradation standard for water quality in this, clearly one of Oregon's most important and ecologically significant streams;
2. Only ODEQ has the authority and responsibility to set that standard; and
3. Oregon's ORW rules allow watershed restoration activities that may have short-term water quality and habitat impacts but clearly have long-term water quality benefits.

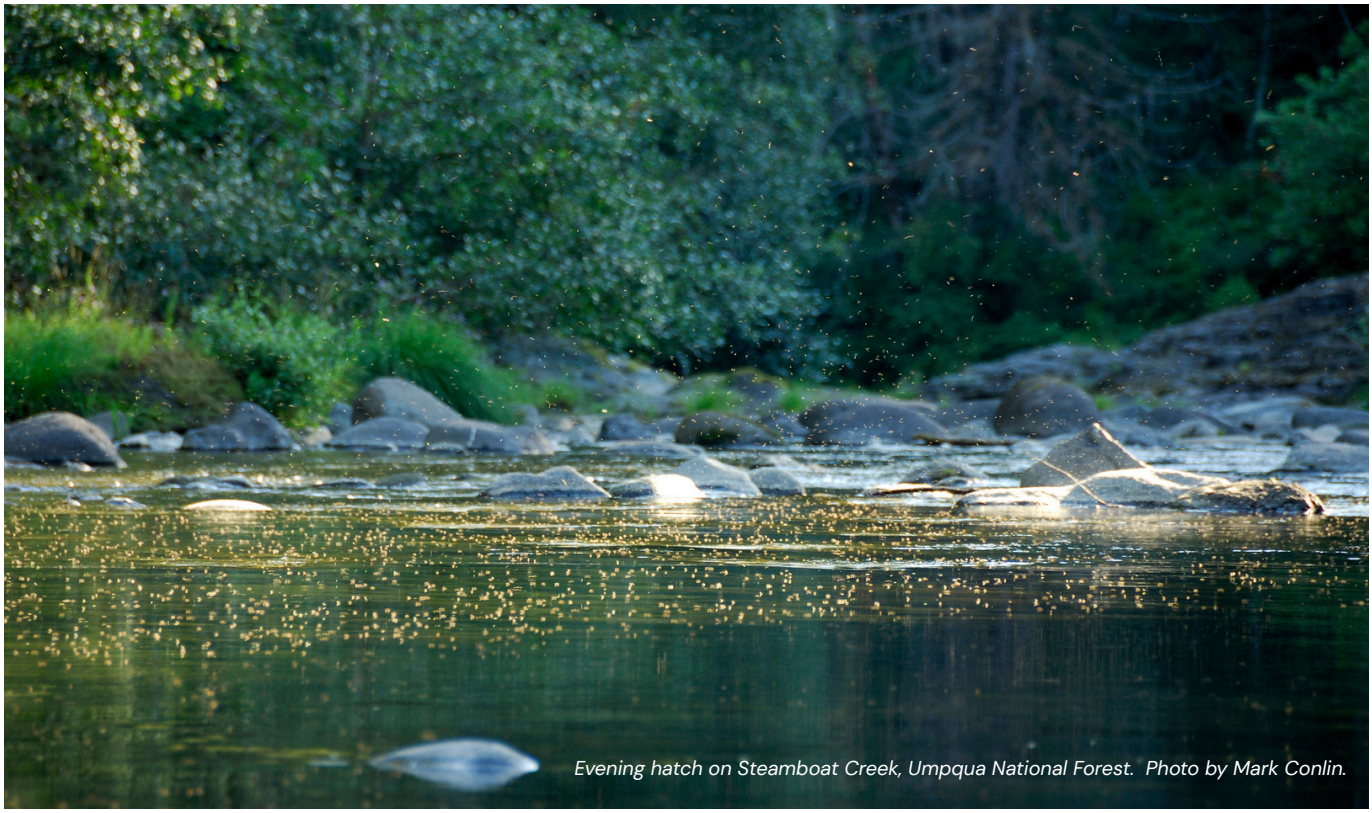


Summer steelhead in Steamboat Creek's Big Bend Pool. Photo by George Ostertag.

Dissatisfied with the way these matters were conveyed to the OEQC at its May meeting, we submitted detailed comments in writing to the Commission to set the record straight.

Since then, we have had frank discussions with Forest Service and ODEQ officials about the path forward for Steamboat. We have emphasized the critical importance of the very cold water temperatures in Steamboat Creek to well over half of the total wild summer steelhead run in the entire North Umpqua River system. Our discussions to date have been constructive. We are optimistic about addressing all concerns collaboratively and successfully.

Please stay tuned for updates in the months ahead about when and how you can help with the nominations for Steamboat Creek, Rough and Ready Creek, the Illinois River and perhaps other Northwest rivers, streams, lakes, estuaries and wetlands as our region's next Outstanding Resource Waters.



Evening hatch on Steamboat Creek, Umpqua National Forest. Photo by Mark Conlin.

Resources:

Illinois River Petition: oregon.gov/deq/wq/Documents/trIllinoisORWnom.pdf
Rough and Ready Creek Petition: oregon.gov/deq/wq/Documents/trRoughReadyORWnom.pdf
Steamboat Petition: oregon.gov/deq/wq/Documents/trSteamboatORWnom.pdf
Water Quality Standards Triennial Review: oregon.gov/deq/wq/pages/triennial-review.aspx



The renowned North Umpqua River. Photo by Nick Basaraba.

PROGRAM UPDATE:

NORTH UMPQUA

Resilience, Renewal & the Fight for Wild Rivers



Liz Gilliam - Conservation Scientist

Securing the Future of the Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Sanctuary

The Steamboat Creek Basin – natal stream of more than half the North Umpqua's summer steelhead – is heating up. Our recent analysis of long-term stream temperature trends shows troubling signs: after a period of cooling in the 1980s & 90's tied to riparian recovery, Steamboat Creek and several of its tributaries are now warming significantly. Big Bend Creek, buffered by groundwater, remains stable, but other creeks like Cedar and Canton are showing clear signs of thermal stress. The impacts of wildfires since 2020, including widespread canopy loss, are likely accelerating this trend.

The Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Special Management Area (aka The Sanctuary) was created to honor the ecological value of the Steamboat Basin – but it lacks the management framework to truly protect it. We're calling for a dedicated, science-based management plan that includes:

- A basin-wide, long-term stream monitoring network
- Post-fire restoration prioritization and fire prevention efforts
- A collaborative management structure, linking agencies, tribes, and community partners

The takeaway: The Sanctuary cannot be protected by designation alone. It needs action. If we wait, the cold water refuge it promises may be lost.



Our ongoing efforts for the Sanctuary honors its purpose, and the wonderful legacy of Frank and Jeanne Moore. Photo by Chris Daughters.

Snorkel Surveys & Youth Engagement: Carrying the Work Forward

Since 2011, we've led nearly annual snorkel surveys in Canton Creek – expanding into Steamboat Basin in 2019 – to monitor fish response to habitat and climate changes. Aside from Forest Area closures due to wildfires and a global pandemic, the surveys have been conducted every year. These surveys are among the few in the region that track long-term fish population data, including a rare pre-fire dataset before the devastating 2020 Archie Creek fire.

Phoenix School students conducting snorkel surveys.





But this work is about more than data. It's also about connection. Students from the Phoenix School have helped us snorkel and survey every year – gaining hands-on science skills and developing a personal stake in protecting rivers. The benefits of this collaboration are many, and our hope is that these experiences foster an understanding, appreciation and love of our natural resources, incentivizing our future watershed stewards and scientists, and that these experiences have a ripple effect on friends and family.

We're working with the Oregon Conservation Corps and other youth organizations to carry this program forward in 2026. The need is urgent: for science, for stewardship, and for inspiring the next generation of river defenders.

ACTION: We need $30,000 to support snorkel gear, staffing, and youth outreach in 2026. Every donation helps ensure this program survives and thrives.

Hatchery Politics: What the Budget Really Means

Despite our opposition, the Oregon Legislature approved $1.4 million to maintain Umpqua hatchery programs through 2027. But the fight isn't over.

In 2020 the North Umpqua Coalition was formed of several groups including Pacific Rivers, interested in the health of the watershed. An early Coalition effort led to a 2022 decision by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission to end the summer steelhead hatchery program on the North Umpqua. Opposing entities including Douglas County promptly filed a lawsuit challenging the Commission action, and at that time succeeded in obtaining an order from the court that the hatchery program continue while the case proceeded. The Commission responded with its position that it had acted entirely lawfully and was mostly successful in both the Court of Appeal and the Oregon Supreme Court. The case was returned to the Marion County Court for further proceedings on a much-trimmed basis for Douglas County. At that time, the Commission and the North Umpqua Coalition successfully objected to the restraining order; the judge agreed and withdrew the injunction, so the summer steelhead hatchery program ended, though the County's lawsuit continues. Motions seeking the end of the litigation are expected this fall.

Thanks to the advocacy of many including Pacific Rivers, the budget bill includes a critical requirement: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) must now report on the long-term viability of hatchery operations in the basin, assess alternatives, and include the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians in the process. The Rock Creek Hatchery – Oregon's lowest-ranked facility in the recent statewide assessment, presently non-operational and with $40-50 million in projected modification costs – must now justify its future.

We believe this is our moment to push for fiscal and ecological accountability. According to the ODFW Hatchery Assessment, operating costs of hatcheries are outpacing inflation with variable costs attributable to approximately half the budget related to personal services, fish food, utilities, and travel. Ongoing financial sustainability will rely on a combination of increased revenues and decreased costs. Hatchery spending should reflect long-term sustainability and support wild fish recovery – not business as usual.



Officials with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife work to remove an estimated 700 adult spring chinook and summer steelhead from the Rock Creek Fish Hatchery during the September 2020 Archie Creek Fire. Photo courtesy of Matt Hill.



Rock Creek Hatchery after Archie Creek Fire. Photo by Kirk Blaine.

Assessment of ODFW State Hatchery Infrastructure Alternatives
Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, March 5, 2025:

dfw.state.or.us/fish/hatchery/docs/resilience/Lynker_Hatchery_Infrastructure_Assessment.pdf

Winchester Dam: A Relic on the Brink

We have remained deeply invested in the evolving story of Winchester Dam – an aging structure that continues to hinder native fish passage, degrade habitat and break environmental laws.

Litigation and Legal Developments

- In **February 2025**, WaterWatch of Oregon, Steamboaters, and the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations (PCFFA) secured permission to intervene in a state fish-passage enforcement proceeding, supporting ODFW's order for new and upgraded upstream and downstream fish facilities at Winchester Dam.



Thousands of lamprey were seen struggling and dying while faulty dam repairs were underway. Photo by Kirk Blaine.

- In May 2025, the ODFW formally filed a $27.6 million damages claim against Winchester Water Control District (WWCD) and its contractors. The lawsuit addresses the avoidable death of over 550,000 juvenile Pacific lamprey during repair work in August 2023 – an environmental blow amplified by ineffective fish-salvage planning. The president of WWCD Board of Directors also happens to own TerraFirma Foundation Systems, the basement and foundation company that won the contract to implement dam repairs, ultimately resulting in a botched construction implementation. Both State and Federal cases had hearings in April 2025, to enforce modern fish-passage standards and accountability.
- Meanwhile, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has issued a pre-enforcement notice to the District concerning Class I water quality violations, including concrete discharge and use of unpermitted tire mats in the river. A final enforcement order is expected in the coming weeks. The dam, we believe, is also illegally storing 91-acre feet of water behind the dam in excess of their allotted water rights.



Rubber mats being used as a temporary road surface at Winchester Dam, August 2023. Photo by Kirk Blaine.



Concrete seepage into the North Umpqua River, August 2023. Photo by Kirk Blaine.

Fish Passage & Ecological Impact

The disintegrating, 17-foot-high, 135-year-old Winchester Dam imposes a partial barrier to native salmon, steelhead, cutthroat trout, threatened Oregon Coast coho, and culturally significant lamprey. It remains **Oregon's 2nd highest-priority** privately-owned structure for fish-passage correction, limiting access to over **160 miles** of quality cold-water habitat.



Winchester Dam. Photo by Lisa Stout.

Upgrades would cost an estimated **$100 million,** whereas removal – widely supported by conservation groups – could be completed for between **$3 and $6 million**, with minimal cost to the community. Environmental groups, led by WaterWatch of Oregon, have offered to fund removal at

little or no expense to WWCD, reflecting a spirit of collaboration and restoration over conflict. With wild fish populations imperiled, it is past time to remove such an impactful and unsafe river-spanning structure.

Moving Forward Together

Winchester Dam represents a challenge due to its legacy of harm to fish and violations of environmental regulations. But the opportunity is what we look forward to: legal and regulatory avenues are converging on removal as the most effective, timely solution. We remain hopeful that this becomes the turning point when law, science, and community converge to protect the Umpqua's wild legacy – and pave the way for a free-flowing river and unimpeded wild fish passage at this location.

From the Sanctuary's future to hatchery reform and the removal of one of the state's worst fish barriers, Pacific Rivers is on the front lines. With our leadership of the North Umpqua Coalition, we're also uniting partners for bold, coordinated action.

This work is big, and it's urgent. But with your support, it's possible.

- *Support our work: pacificrivers.org/donate*
- *Partner with us: info@pacificrivers.org*
- *Follow our journey: @PacificRivers on social media*



The North Umpqua is considered by many anglers to be one of the most beautiful and challenging places to fish. It is home to one of the world's longest summer steelhead season, spanning from June until mid-November. Photo by Kirk Blaine.



SHORT-TERM FIX, LONG-TERM LOSS:

THE COSTLY CHEHALIS DAM



We are closely watching the process of the proposal to construct a new dam in the Chehalis River. It is clear that dams pose far-reaching and long-term impacts to waterways and river ecology, making this a starkly contradictory project in the age of dam removals. This spring, the Washington State Legislature allocated just over **$75 million** to the Chehalis Basin Strategy in the Department of Ecology's capital budget – to support dam planning, restoration planning, and implementation in the '25-'27 biennium.

We are anticipating the release of Washington State's Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in November 2025, followed by a 60-day public comment period and at least two public meetings. This will be an important opportunity to weigh in on this consequential project. **Please show up and let your voices be heard.**

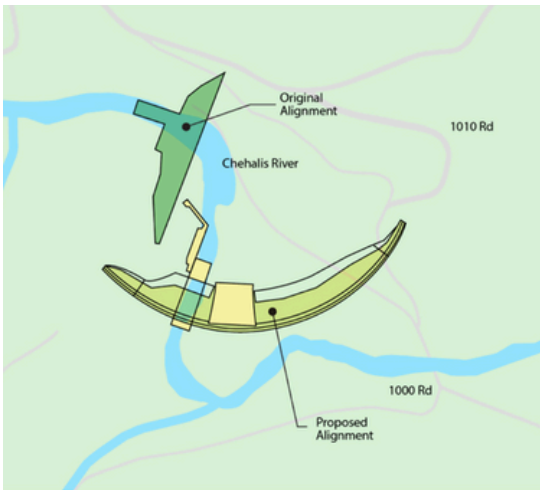
Also, we are tracking the Chehalis Basin Board's development of its much-anticipated and long-awaited Long-term Strategy (LTS) recommendation to the Governor and Legislature, which we expect to be released by Fall 2026. The LTS will serve as the official blueprint for: How much money the Legislature should invest over the next 10–30 years; What types of projects will be prioritized; Which flood and salmon solutions will move forward (i.e., continue to pursue the proposed dam, recommend the system of levees, floodwalls and drainage improvements that encompass the Local Actions Non-dam (LAND) alternative, or perhaps some other approach); and how agencies, tribes, and local governments will coordinate implementation.

Trading Salmon for Concrete

In 2024, The **Flood Control Zone District** revised the design of the proposed dam near Pe Ell: The revision moved the dam location **about 1,000 feet upstream,** triggering another round of planning and permitting. The re-design features a **Flood Retention Expandable** (FRE) dam design: this design is 45% wider than the original design, and would stand 224 ft tall with a storage capacity of 62,000 acre-feet. The

The sparkling blue water of the currently free-flowing Chehalis River. Photo by Nick Basaraba.





Proposed dam renderings by the Office of the Chehalis Basin. The updated alignment is 45% larger than originally proposed.

FRE design materials explicitly state the facility is being designed to allow for **expanding the size of the dam in the future,** with a storage capacity up to ~130,000 acre-feet, much larger than what is being planned and permitted for currently.

We have many concerns we have about the proposal. First, it would infringe on Tribal rights and have major ecological impacts. Second, since the dam would lie in a fault zone, it would actually create new types of catastrophic flooding risks. Third, it simply would not pencil out in terms of costs, risks and benefits, because the financial burden would be enormous and long-term, and the risks to salmon multi-pronged.

Modeling has shown larger stage flood stage reductions near the dam site (upper basin), tapering to modest reductions in the Twin Cities (about a single foot in some locations). A great deal of infrastructure would remain prone to flooding even after the dam is operational.

The dam would concentrate risks to salmon (trap-and-haul dependence, pump-fed fishway operations during events, sediment / temperature management) in one facility. Salmon survival would then be highly dependent on complex and costly artificial passage infrastructure that would be expensive to maintain. The long construction period, estimated to be at least five years, would impact salmon and steelhead repeatedly during critical months when construction work is possible.



Map of the Chehalis basin. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.



Clearcut headwaters in the Chehalis Basin, owned by Weyerhaeuser. These deforested headwaters shed water and sediment into the Chehalis River with increasing speed — yet upstream land practices remain unaddressed as officials pursue a costly dam. Photo by Shane Anderson.



Site of the proposed dam above Pe Ell, Washington. Photo by Shane Anderson.

There are many concerns and many better options to address flooding concerns without a dam. Together, those options are greater, faster, surer and cheaper. When any massively costly new facility is proposed, the question should be: *For that amount of money what would be the alternatives?* Taxpayers and utility ratepayers deserve to know.

A Multi-Million Dollar Mistake: Why the Dam Just Doesn't Add Up

The most reliable public estimates of the proposed **Flood Retention Expandable (FRE) dam** project on the Chehalis River – sometimes referred to simply as the flood-retention dam – are that its total costs (including planning, environmental review, construction, and mitigation) would likely range from **$400 million to over $600 million**, with some projections extending up to **$900 million** depending on the scope of habitat mitigation and flood storage volume considered. The enormous costs of installing a dam will have marginal flood control benefits – if constructed, the 100-year flood waters are estimated to be lowered in the Twin Cities by just 1.5 feet and only protect 25% of buildings that are at-risk. Surely there is a better way.

And the costs as presented are just through construction. They do not include the burden of ongoing long-term operations and maintenance. The long-term cost burden is estimated to be $2 million+ per year just for operations, plus 25–50 year replacement cycles for fish passage systems. It is unclear who will shoulder these expenses, but it is highly likely that it will be Lewis County and taxpayers.



Oregon spotted frog egg mass in the Chehalis River Basin. Photo courtesy of L. Gullikson/USFWS.

Building Habitat, Not Dams: The Real Flood Solution

The good news is that continued on-the-ground restoration remains robust. **Over 140 flood and habitat projects** have been executed since 2017, protecting nearly **300 acres** of new aquatic habitat and safeguarding over **200 homes & businesses** and the **Aquatic Species Restoration Plan (ASRP)** has invested around **$28 million** (as of 2025) to restore **300 acres** and **12 stream miles** of habitat, reopening **~100 miles** of waterways for fish passage.

The **Local Actions Non-Dam (LAND) alternative** focuses on practical, community-scale solutions such as elevating or floodproofing buildings, restoring floodplains, upgrading culverts and levees, improving stormwater systems, and relocating the most at-risk infrastructure. Unlike the proposed dam, these actions reduce flood risk without blocking fish passage, degrading habitat, or triggering massive mitigation costs. They can be implemented sooner, adapted over time, and targeted where flooding impacts people most. The LAND approach supports both community safety and ecological recovery, avoids a billion-dollar price tag, and addresses upstream drivers like land use and deforestation that a dam would ignore. Unlike a new dam, levees and habitat projects have **lower operating and maintenance costs** and **do not rely on perpetual fish-passage systems**. Modular investments can be sequenced, adapted, and expanded without locking the basin into a single, high-risk structure. **These would be much better options than the proposed dam for protecting lives, property and communities.**

A combination of efforts, without the installation of a dam, can prioritize community flood protection, provide net benefits for salmon via distributed habitat restoration, and avoid the fish-passage & O&M liabilities of a new high-head dam – a burden that is very large and recurring.

Damming Salmon's Future

Pacific Rivers is a key stakeholder in the petition to list the spring Chinook salmon of the Chehalis and other Washington-state coastal rivers on the Endangered Species List. The proposed Chehalis River Dam threatens the recovery of critically endangered Southern Resident killer whales and salmon populations, further jeopardizing their survival. While a re-designed bypass channel is a potentially positive improvement on the original design, the challenges in replicating natural river conditions are significant concerns. Past fish passage projects where bypasses and fish ladders have been installed have seen mixed success, and this new design is completely new and untested. **Construction of the dam would inundate approximately 847 acres and extend 6.2 miles,** leading to the loss of critical spawning and rearing habitats.

The Chehalis is one of the last remaining undeveloped rivers in SW Washington and is critical habitat for many species, including spring Chinook salmon. To consider this type of structure when salmon populations are at less than half of their historical numbers – with Chehalis spring Chinook currently being considered to be listed as Endangered – is irresponsible.

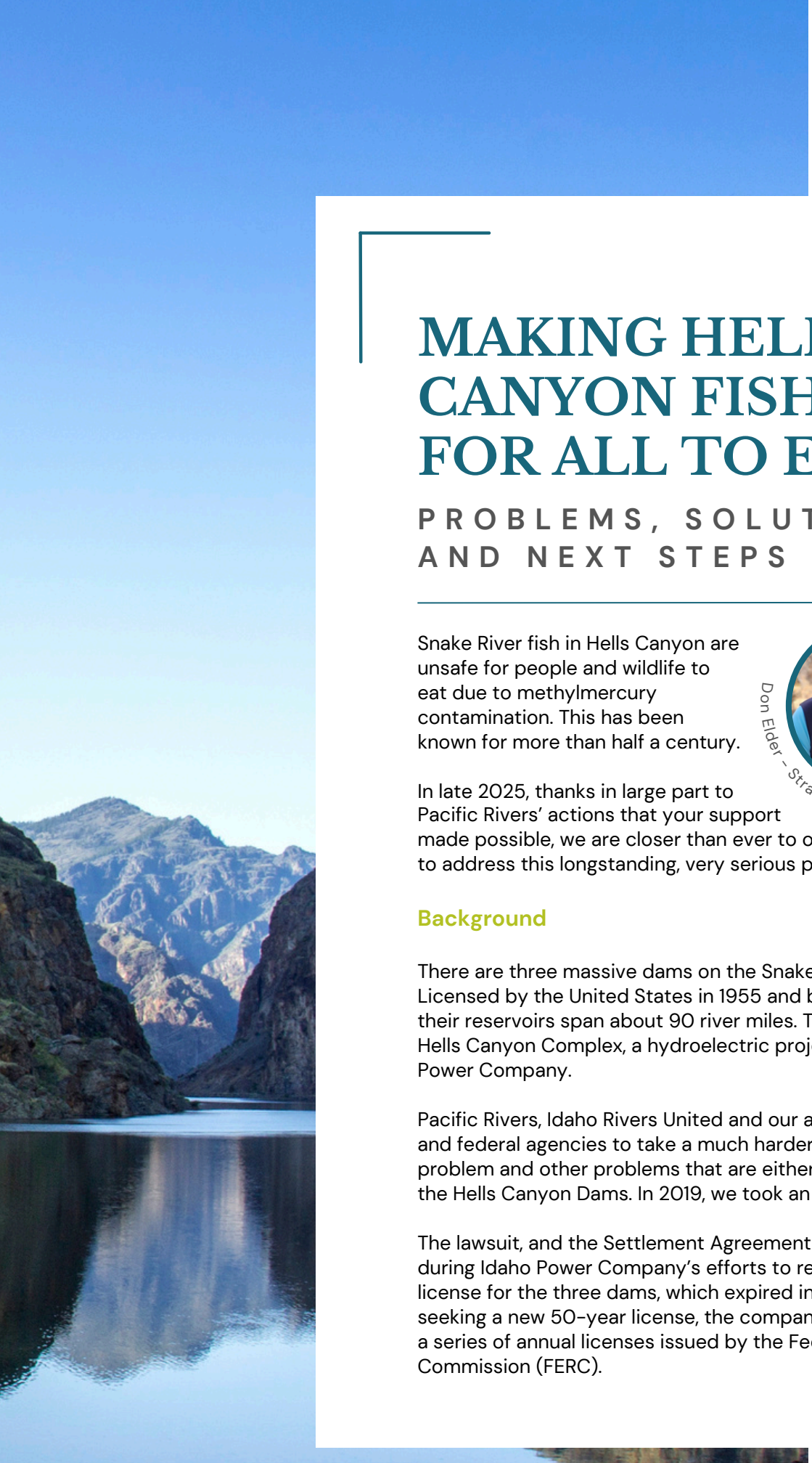


Chehalis River. Photo by Nick Basaraba.

Stay Active and Informed

You can monitor this issue with us by following the work of the Chehalis Basin Strategy/Office of the Chehalis Basin and the Flood Control Zone District. You can also attend the upcoming Chehalis Basin Board meetings virtually. The next regular meetings are Thursday, November 6 and Thursday, December 4. You can find the virtual meeting link here: www.ezview.wa.gov/site/alias__1962/37068/chehalis_basin_board.aspx.

You can also engage directly. **Keep your eyes out for Washington Department of Ecology's Draft EIS expected around November 21st.** Following the release of the DEIS, there will be a 60-day comment period with two in-person public hearings and potentially two virtual public hearings. It's important that voices are heard in support of a plan that **directly reduces community exposure, maximizes salmon benefits via distributed habitat restoration, and avoids the long-term O&M and fish-passage liabilities of a new high-head dam.**



Hells Canyon.
Photo by Bonnie Moreland..

MAKING HELLS CANYON FISH SAFE FOR ALL TO EAT

PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS AND NEXT STEPS



Snake River fish in Hells Canyon are unsafe for people and wildlife to eat due to methylmercury contamination. This has been known for more than half a century.

In late 2025, thanks in large part to Pacific Rivers' actions that your support made possible, we are closer than ever to official state actions needed to address this longstanding, very serious pollution problem.

Background

There are three massive dams on the Snake River in Hells Canyon. Licensed by the United States in 1955 and built between 1958 and 1967, their reservoirs span about 90 river miles. Together they comprise the Hells Canyon Complex, a hydroelectric project operated by the Idaho Power Company.

Pacific Rivers, Idaho Rivers United and our allies have long urged state and federal agencies to take a much harder look at the methylmercury problem and other problems that are either caused or exacerbated by the Hells Canyon Dams. In 2019, we took an additional step – to court.

The lawsuit, and the Settlement Agreement described below, arose during Idaho Power Company's efforts to renew its federal operating license for the three dams, which expired in 2005. Since then, while seeking a new 50-year license, the company has been operating under a series of annual licenses issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).



Licensed in 1955 and completed in 1967, the three-dam Hells Canyon Complex is the largest privately-owned hydropower complex in the nation.



The Snake River downstream of the Hells Canyon dams. Photo by Bonnie Moreland.

Section 401 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) prohibits FERC from issuing new or renewed licenses for dams unless states certify that their operation will not violate their water quality standards. Oregon and Idaho standards for temperature and methylmercury are violated persistently and significantly in and downstream of the Hells Canyon reservoirs. Because the dams straddle both Idaho and Oregon, the relicensing effort requires certification by both states.

The Clean Water Act (CWA) requires that a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) of pollutants be established for waterbodies where state water quality standards cannot be met through typical regulatory control of one or a few direct pollution sources. The TMDL sets an upper limit for the pollutants in question – a sort of "pollution budget" – that then drives decisions about management changes necessary to bring problems under enough control for water quality standards to be met and maintained.

In 2019, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) issued a CWA Section 401 certification for the three Hells Canyon Dams. Pacific Rivers and its allies believed the certification was grossly inadequate. It failed to specify how much the methylmercury levels would have to be reduced or a clear timeframe for reductions. It also failed to provide reasonable assurance that separate violations of the temperature standard would end.





None of the Hells Canyon dams provide fish passage. Hells Canyon Dam, the furthest downstream, is the endpoint for migratory fish. Photos by Sam Beebe (left) and Don Barrett (right).

Pacific Rivers and Idaho Rivers United petitioned for judicial review of the ODEQ certification. That lawsuit was later consolidated by the Marion County Circuit Court with a similar one brought by the Nez Perce Tribe. Negotiations with ODEQ, the Oregon Department of Natural Resources (ODNR), and Idaho Power ensued.

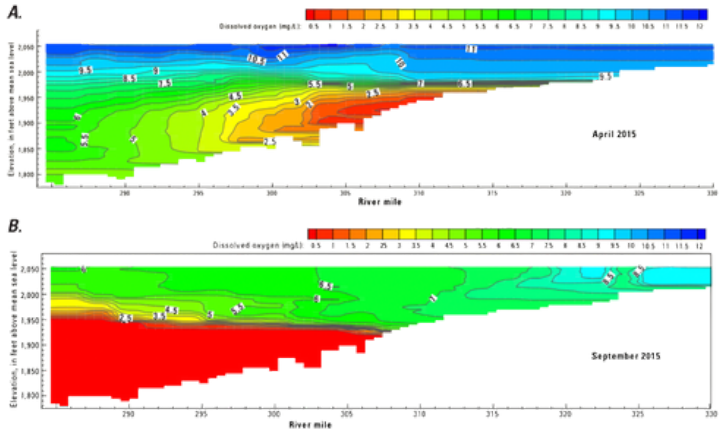
In 2021, Pacific Rivers, Idaho Rivers United, and the Nez Perce Tribe entered into a joint Settlement Agreement with Oregon. The Agreement calls for changes in dam operations to provide water temperatures safe for salmonids downstream; reintroduction of spring Chinook salmon and summer steelhead in Pine Creek above Hells Canyon Dam; and the establishment of a methylmercury TMDL for the Snake River and its reservoirs. ***As part of the Agreement, the State of Oregon and Idaho Power Company contributed a combined $1.5 million toward further scientific studies of the Hells Canyon methylmercury problem.***

Study Results

Those studies have been conducted by experts from a large number of agencies, universities, and research firms who comprise a technical committee called for by the Settlement Agreement. In the last few years, they have revealed much about the nature, degree, and sources of the Hells Canyon methylmercury problem.

Today we know that:

- Both natural and human sources of mercury exist in the Snake River basin.
- Human sources include past and present mining and industrial operations in the basin as well as current airborne mercury from coal-fired power plants and countless other sources around the world today.
- Excessive nutrients from runoff and discharges from farms and cities cause algae blooms that create low oxygen conditions in slower-moving portions of the Snake and its tributaries.
- Certain bacteria that thrive in low-oxygen conditions convert mercury into methylmercury -- mercury's most toxic form.
- In the blazing summer sun of Hells Canyon, all three reservoirs stratify distinctly, with warmer, oxygen-rich water on top, and much colder, oxygen-poor water on the bottom.
- Extreme low-oxygen conditions in the Snake are first created in Brownlee Reservoir, which is the largest and farthest upstream of the three reservoirs and receives its input directly from the upper Snake.



Graphic illustrating the growth of the anoxic zone in Brownlee from April to September 2015. Current estimates are that reducing its annual volume and duration by about 1/3 could reduce methylmercury production by 2/3 or more. Reductions at the top of the food chain could be greater still.

- In spring and early summer, the Snake's excessive load of nutrients creates massive algae blooms in the upper portion of Brownlee that deplete dissolved oxygen in its waters.
- As sediment and decaying material sink to the bottom of Brownlee and the other two reservoirs (Oxbow and Hells Canyon), they further deplete oxygen in their depths.
- Prodigious amounts of methylmercury are then generated in the cold, anoxic zone at the bottom of the reservoirs.
- ***The larger the anoxic zone and the longer it lasts, the more methylmercury is generated.***

- The methymercury remains trapped in the depths of the reservoirs until late summer or early fall, when stratification breaks down and the upper and lower layers of the reservoir mix.
- At that time, rapid bioaccumulation up the food chain takes place. Over days and weeks, concentrations increase hundreds- or thousands-fold at each step up the chain from microorganisms to invertebrates to small fish.
- Over weeks and months, concentrations become greater still in larger and longer-lived fish, particularly those that feed primarily on smaller fish.
- Over time, concentrations in larger, longer-lived fish reach extraordinary levels that vastly exceed state standards for safe consumption. Levels are so high in some of the river's largest fish, such as sturgeon and catfish, that they have been called "Superfund sites with fins."
- Impacts on fish are not limited to those in the reservoirs. In fact, extremely high concentrations in fish are found downstream of the reservoirs, and remain elevated at least as far downstream as the Snake's confluence with the Salmon River, some sixty free-flowing miles downstream of Hells Canyon dam.
- Nor are impacts limited to fish and the people who eat them. Mammals such as otters are also affected, as are many birds that eat emergent insects as well as fish.
- This is an economic issue, an ecosystem issue, a human health issue, and an environmental justice issue of the first order, especially for the Nez Perce people, whose treaty rights to Snake River fish have long been and continue to be violated.

Recipe for extreme mercury toxicity:

Impoundment + excessive organics + excessive nutrients + heat = ***extreme eutrophication***

Then mercury + stratification + hypoxia (volume + duration) + turnover + bioaccumulation = ***extremely serious methylmercury problems***

Solutions

While the nature of the methylmercury problem is complex, the solutions are not. It's time to clean up the Snake River.

Even if the methylmercury problem did not exist, we would already be decades overdue to meet the Clean Water Act's minimum goal of "fishable/swimmable" water quality in the Snake River and its tributaries. Meeting that goal by limiting nutrient pollution sooner rather than later will go a very long way toward solving the methylmercury problem.

One of the most important insights from the recent studies is that significant reductions in the volume and duration of the anoxic zone in the reservoirs can lead to much larger reductions in the amount of methylmercury generated in them



Hells Canyon. Photo by Nan Palmero.



Brownlee Reservoir. Photo by Ben Peterson.

each year. Current estimates are that a ⅓ reduction in the volume of anoxia can lead to a reduction of ⅔ or more in methylmercury production at the bottom of the food chain. That in turn can yield much greater reductions still in concentrations higher in the food chain. Just as the problem grows exponentially up the food chain, it can shrink exponentially as its causes are reduced.

Recent studies have shown that a highly disproportionate share of the nutrients and other pollutants entering Brownlee come from the watersheds of seven Snake tributaries less than 100 miles upstream. Focusing on cleaning those up will yield the greatest bang for the buck.

Where will the bucks come from? Numerous state and federal programs provide technical and/or financial assistance to cities and farms for the types of changes in infrastructure and management needed to clean up the river. Idaho Power, which owns the Hells Canyon Complex (HCC) of dams and reservoirs, is already providing assistance as well. Projects it has helped fund are already making a difference. As the operator of the largest privately owned private hydroelectric complex in the United States, it can and should do more.

Next steps

Development of the TMDL by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) is now underway. We expect it to be ready for public review and comment this winter and ready for adoption by next summer.

To earn our full support, it must include

- The clear long-term goal: Making Snake River fish safe to eat by 2045.
- The required "pollution budget": One that is stringent enough, and that has a margin of safety big enough, to ensure that the clear long-term goal will be met.
- A cleanup plan: Development of a comprehensive Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) designed to bring pollutant levels within TMDL limits in two decades or less.
- A solid monitoring program: Investment in a robust monitoring program to document regular progress, summarized in an annual report to the public.
- Full commitment to adaptive management: A binding agreement to accelerate existing cleanup practices and develop new ones if progress is not fast enough to meet the long-term goal.

We have made our positions outlined above clear and are following the process closely. Please stay tuned for updates and ways you can help.

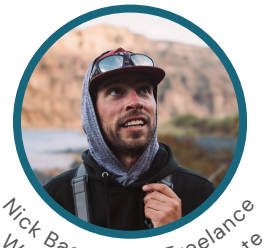
For much more information about this matter please refer to the "Hells Canyon Water Quality" section on our website, and the in-depth articles in the Fall 2023 and Fall 2024 issues of "Free Flow".



Elwha River. Photo by Jeff Taylor.

ELWHA REBORN:

TEN YEARS AFTER DAM REMOVAL, LOOKING TO THE FUTURE



Nick Basaraba - Freelance Writer and River Advocate

The process for the removal of two dams on the Elwha River began in 2011, marking the beginning of the largest dam removal project in history at the time (now surpassed by the extraordinary removal of four dams on the Klamath River). In 2014, the second dam on the Elwha River, Glines Canyon Dam, was finally removed, beginning the multi-pronged long-term monitoring and post-removal mitigation effort focused on everything between the headwaters, estuary, and nearshore habitat. For the first time in over 100 years, the Elwha flowed 45 miles into the Strait of Juan de Fuca free of man-made obstructions, reconnecting a drainage of 321 square miles. The river found a path of least resistance and cut through the barren scars of treeless valleys left behind from the old reservoirs. A pulse of life survived in resident rainbow and bull trout, and the decimated numbers of all five species of Pacific salmon. Within just a few years, sediment once trapped behind the dams began moving downstream, reshaping the riverbed, expanding the estuary by about 70 acres, and creating new habitat for fish and shellfish. Now, over 10 years later, we have witnessed the resurgence of the Elwha, which continues to inspire conservation projects throughout salmon country.

Even before the dams were built, the Elwha River watershed was considered unique. Draining the northern tip of the Olympic Mountains, the Elwha was a thriving anadromous fish ecosystem and home to numerous life histories of steelhead. The Elwha also experienced returns of some of the world's largest Chinook salmon, some weighing as much as 100 pounds. Coho, chum, sockeye, and pink salmon also proliferated throughout the watershed, making it one of the most dynamic Pacific Coast rivers.



The Elwha River revegetation project focuses on restoring native plant species to the river's ecosystem in Olympic National Park. The initiative helps improve biodiversity, stabilize riverbanks, and support local wildlife. It is part of ongoing environmental efforts to reverse damage from historical human activity and restore ecological balance in the area. Photo by Jeff Duda.



Natalie Kunert fishes a run on the Olympic Peninsula's Hoh River for winter steelhead while her dog Nessie watches on in anticipation. Protected by Olympic National Park, the rivers of the Olympic Peninsula have some of the most intact habitat for migratory fish in the Pacific Northwest. Photo by Nick Basaraba.



The Elwha River is home to the bull trout, a species known for its resilience in the challenging river ecosystem. The river's waters and rocky environment support various aquatic species, making it a significant area for wildlife conservation and environmental research. Photo courtesy of Nature & Science.

Following removal of the two dams, everybody watched in awe as summer steelhead and bull trout populations quickly bounced back and returned to the river in inspiring numbers. The population of summer steelhead in the Elwha is now the largest of Olympic Peninsula rivers. Bull trout numbers are not only increasing, but their average size is too. Bull trout adults are now venturing out into the ocean and returning to the river with regularity - an anadromous behavior that returned with dam removal and estuary restoration. With the patient management of the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe and their partners, coho salmon numbers have reached a point where tribal subsistence harvest has occurred in the past two years, marking the first time in recent history that tribal members could look toward the Elwha once again as a place to feed their families. 2019 saw a return of 2,000 coho and in 2023, only four years later, 7,000 coho returned. That trend dropped only slightly in 2024 with a return of 6,402 adult coho, but the number remains inspiring.

The landscape along the river above the old dam sites is now receiving seasonal infusions of the ocean nutrients it had been starved of for a century thanks to increasing numbers of returning salmon. Now, over a decade after dam removal, the old reservoir scars have been transformed into a lush riparian zone that is being re-habituated by wildlife, aided by seed dispersal once blocked by the dams. The tribe and its partners have sped up recovery by implementing efforts to replant native plants, reintroducing important species to encourage the landscape to reclaim what was lost in the era of the dams.

Without the dams, not only are nutrients returning thanks to salmon returns, but a steady flow of sediments is reinvigorating the river delta, restoring the estuary and adjacent ocean areas to vibrant conditions that existed before dam construction. Dungeness crab have made a resurgence and so have forage fish critical to salmon. Since 2002, the tribe has worked to restore a three-mile stretch of beach near the river mouth, replanting beds of eelgrass to attract these forage fish for adult salmon. Anchovies, herring, eulachon, sand lance, and smelt are all important food sources for salmon as they gain ocean weight, which gives them the stamina to travel upriver and complete their spawning cycle.

Time: The Key Component in Post-Dam Removal Recovery

While there are many things to celebrate in the decade since dam removal, the Elwha continues to remind us that one of the most important elements of river restoration of this magnitude remains simply time. Challenges persist. Restoring what was lost is even more difficult if we have little understanding of what was there to begin with. Stories of abundance in the Elwha have been passed down through generations of the Lower Elwha Klallam tribe, reminding us of the Elwha's full potential. We can see what was lost, and what can be regained in grainy photos of fishermen hoisting salmon the size of young teenagers.



The rebounding Elwha, flowing freely. Photo courtesy of Claumoho.

Today's climate is different, and the challenges salmon face are too. Chinook salmon numbers continue to remain lower than hoped, as do sockeye, pink, and chum salmon. The Elwha's fish runs are considered unique and genetically distinguishable from those of other rivers - few rivers on the north side of the Olympic Peninsula enter directly into the Strait of Juan de Fuca. This makes replacing the Elwha's broodstock genetics a difficult task. Spring Chinook numbers quickly declined when the dams were constructed over 100 years ago and have struggled to recover. These salmon once relied on high waters brought on by winter and spring storms to pass over challenging falls on their way far upriver to spawning areas, which were cut off when dam construction began.

Unfortunately, spring Chinook numbers across the Olympic Peninsula - not just the Elwha - are concerning (see "Spring Chinook Salmon and How You Can Help" in the Spring 2023 edition of *Free Flow*). Fall runs of Chinook have also been slow to bounce back after dam removal, and the tribe established the timing of their subsistence coho fishery in a way that reduces the possibility of bycatch. However, Chinook redd numbers are on the rise and are documented each season above the Glines Canyon Dam site and further up in the Elwha watershed.



Underwater close-ups of a King Chinook Salmon (left) and pink salmon (right) swimming in the Elwha River. Photos courtesy of Olympic National Park.

Pink salmon numbers were low enough that fishery managers were concerned about genetic depression, or too few fish to maintain a population without the harmful effects of inbreeding. In recent years however, higher numbers of returning pink salmon offer a glimmer of hope. In 2025, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife estimated that over 7.7 million pink salmon will return to Puget Sound rivers. Nearly 300,000 of those pink salmon are expected to return to the Strait of Juan de Fuca rivers and fisheries managers are eager to see pink salmon returns in the Elwha.



The Elwha River restoration project includes planting Douglas firs to restore the river's ecosystem, focusing on reforestation and habitat improvement for local wildlife. Photos courtesy of Olympic National Park.





The tribe continues to operate its hatchery to assist Chinook, chum, coho, and steelhead populations and will continue to do so until population numbers reach target goals and begin to stabilize. Guided by extensive monitoring and research, their plan extends far into the future in some instances; habitat restoration goals for a fully sustainable Elwha River ecosystem are estimated to be met as far out as 2075. In a recovery plan published in December of 2024, fishery managers set the goal of naturally spawning Chinook at 10,000 adults and current numbers still have a ways to go. This number is the Viable Salmon Population goal for fall Chinook, and initial forecasts suggested this might have been reached 16 years after dam removal. However, projections now push this timing further back to 25-30 years post-dam removal, making the years between 2040-2045 a more likely timeframe.

Because the dams blocked access to historical spawning sites, all Elwha salmon were forced to spawn in the mainstem of the lower river for 100 years. As a result, most Chinook in the Elwha are the progeny of hatchery-origin fish and lack the ancestral instincts of wild salmon born into a free-flowing river. They are exploring new reaches each year to rediscover suitable spawning habitat, moving into territory further upriver that was inaccessible just over a decade ago.

The tribe and other researchers are approaching recovery with great patience. The majority of Olympic Peninsula rivers hold some of the most intact spawning habitat available to anadromous fish throughout salmon country, giving Elwha Chinook the best opportunity to gain a foothold and ensure their place in the future. Without the intact headwaters and spawning tributaries, salmon recovery in the Elwha would have a much different outlook. Watching the redistribution of salmon, steelhead and bull trout in the Elwha helps inform management and restoration efforts in the wake of other dam removal projects while emphasizing the importance of broader landscape and watershed health.

As salmon and steelhead rediscover portions of the river once lost to them, researchers have begun to observe trends in the fluctuations of seasonal stream flow and how they relate to natural barriers in the Elwha. After the 100-year presence of dams, the river became starved of naturally occurring log jams and woody debris that break up its currents and create critical fish habitat. The Elwha is considered a high-gradient river even by Olympic Peninsula standards, dropping in elevation 23 feet per mile on average. The river is fast and strong, making it challenging for fish migration during periods of higher flows. To mitigate this, the tribe has been busy constructing engineered log jams in the lower river to help break up the main river current and encourage river braids and side channels. The work is underway and time is needed for the full beneficial results to be realized.





Logjams on the Elwha River. Photos courtesy of Natural Systems Design (left) and National Park Service (right).



Tree stumps with springboard holes, remnants of early logging practices, now part of ongoing ecosystem restoration and scientific study. Photo courtesy of Olympic National Park Service.

In 2024, 18 engineered log jams were built in the lower Elwha, adding up to 100 log jams built in total to date. This alleviates concentrated flows while reorganizing the river to include islands on the downstream side of log jams with deep pools on the upstream side. These log jams also force river water downward, into the streambed, where it mixes with shallow groundwater and slows way down as it moves downstream within the streambed gravels (termed hyporheic flows). This helps cool the river during periods of low flows and higher water temperatures, creating comfortable holding areas for migrating fish. In decades to come, woody debris will accumulate naturally, contribute to improved fish passage, and increase critical habitat for juvenile fish.

What Elwha Recovery has Taught Us

When it comes to informing decisions about current or future dam removal projects, the Elwha will forever remain a major exploration in large-scale river restoration projects. Each watershed is undeniably unique, requiring specific strategies and approaches. The Klamath River faces its own challenges, much like the White Salmon River experienced in the years following dam removal. If the Lower Snake River Dams are breached, the Snake and its fish face their own set of trials and tribulations.

While the Elwha is a relatively short, mainstem coastal river fed by smaller streams and tributaries, rivers like the Klamath and Snake are enormous in comparison. They both span state lines and are fed by major,



The body of a fall Coho rests in a shallow riffle, reintroducing oceanic nutrients high up in the watershed where it was born. The nutrients from the bodies of post-spawn salmon ensure the survival of future generations of fish, while also contributing to the health of the entire watershed and ecosystem. Photo by Nick Basaraba.

individual tributaries that all require unique approaches to restoration. The Elwha runs primarily through Olympic National Park, while the Klamath and Snake experience high levels of agricultural use and flow through dramatically different landscapes that are managed by different state, federal, and tribal agencies. How salmon and steelhead populations rebound in these rivers depends on a set of completely different requirements. Valuable lessons have been learned from watching the Elwha evolve into a complex river and dynamic estuary, creating hope for the post-dam Klamath River and driving the continued effort to breach the Lower Snake River dams.

Amidst all the uncertainties about the future, two things are clear: When it comes to reviving salmon and steelhead, dam removal works, and time is the silent current in which we should never lose faith. Like the Elwha carving its canyon over centuries, time shapes the future of our rivers – not all at once, but with a steady, patient force.

For more information on topics related to the Elwha River restoration and other important projects occurring, check out the following links:

Elwha Chapter Update Puget Sound Chinook Recovery Plan:
restoringolympicpeninsulasalmon.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Elwha_Salmon_Recovery_Plan_Update_Dec2024_web.pdf

Coho salmon run supports treaty fishing on the Elwha River:
nwtreatytribes.org/coho-salmon-run-supports-treaty-fishing-on-elwha-river/

Rewilding the Elwha River:
opb.org/article/2025/03/05/elwha-river-washington-wildlife-olympic-peninsula/

Elwha River Logjams Boost Salmon Habitat:
nwtreatytribes.org/elwha-river-logjams-boost-salmon-habitat/

Floodplain Restoration: A Key Component of Watershed Restoration: *Free Flow* Spring 2023:
https://www.pacificrivers.org/uploads/1/1/9/9/119981094/ffspring23.pdf

Dam Removals for Watershed Restoration: Free Flow Spring 2024:
pacificrivers.org/uploads/1/1/9/9/119981094/free_flow_spring_2024_-_digital.pdf



MANY THANKS TO AANCHAL VIDYARTHI

This year we have been honored to have the volunteer services of Aanchal Vidyarthi. A recent graduate of Oregon State University with a degree in Chemical Engineering, she is preparing to begin her post-graduate work this fall at New York University in Environmental Science with a focus on Environmental Economics and Policy. Aanchal contacted us early in the year and offered to work with us half time over a period of more than five months. She began with a review of Pacific Rivers' current conservation projects, then completed River Network's "Clean Water Act Owner's Manual" online training course for watershed advocates. After discussing her takeaways from that work, we agreed to focus the remainder of her time with us on state-level implementation of the Clean Water Act.

Most of the authority and responsibility for Clean Water Act implementation lies with states. Consistent, informed citizen involvement is crucial as states set water quality standards, establish programs to achieve and maintain those standards, and operate pollution control systems on an ongoing basis. Today, with a diminished US EPA and myriad new threats to water quality across the country, citizen involvement in state Clean Water Act programs is more important than ever.

Aanchal identified a key missing link for many watershed advocates. Armed with knowledge of how the federal law works, they can still face a practical barrier in finding key water quality data and public involvement opportunities for their state and watershed. Because each state organizes its information about its CWA programs differently, doing so can be time consuming at best and bewildering at worst. Over the summer, Aanchal researched the CWA programs of Washington, Oregon and Idaho, with an eye toward developing a Northwest companion to the River Network CWA "Owner's Manual". She found and organized links to the information that each state's water quality advocates need to get involved in specific programs and to address specific types of water quality issues.

Aanchal has built a tool of immediate value to Pacific Rivers' board, staff, contractors, interns and volunteers. We are already using it in our work to expand Northwest Outstanding Resource Waters programs, press for proper pollution cleanup plans for "impaired" waters that do not meet standards, and prevent water quality "backsliding" by strengthening implementation of state-level antidegradation policies. Aanchal has also proposed that we build on her work by developing an online Northwest "toolkit" for our partner conservation organizations and watershed advocates across the region. We have embraced that idea and are at work now to find the resources to bring it to life. Stay tuned! In the meantime, we express our deepest gratitude for Aanchal's incredible gifts of time and talent this year, and we wish her all the best in her next endeavors.

REMEMBERING JIM VAN LOAN



On April 6, 2025, a friend of mine and many of yours departed this earth, leaving behind an enviable legacy. Jim was not only a friend to the many, many folks that grew to know him, but he was also a fierce defender of the natural world and, especially, the North Umpqua River (where he served from 2002-2006 on the Resource Advisory Committee for the Umpqua National Forest). He was a member of the Pacific Rivers Board and continued to support the organization in many ways after he left the board. He was a founding board member of The North Umpqua Foundation, to which he lent his wisdom for decades. First appointed by Governor Goldschmidt, he served on the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission for eight years. He also served on the boards of The Steamboaters, Oregon Trout/Freshwater Trust, and Wild Salmon Center. Not many can claim that level of commitment to river conservation.

Jim was also an angler, and one that understood that fishing was more about the folks with whom you shared the adventure than it was about catching fish. Some of the fortunate companions most important to him were Jon Kurtz, Jim Ratzlaff and Roy Skoglund.

Although he may have at first impression seemed miscast as an innkeeper, anyone who was fortunate enough to sit at his table for dinner at the Steamboat Inn was in for a treat (while his wife of 68 years, Sharon, and dear friend Pat Lee appeared to do all of the work.) The cast of characters at that table – curated by Jim – was always interesting and varied, reflecting less his curmudgeonly demeanor than his ability to get along with all sorts of folks.

We have chosen to use a photo of Jim smiling – something many thought never happened. But I knew him as a man with a great sense of humor, part of which was to keep us guessing. In the end, I came to think that most of the time he just smiled differently than most folks.

Those who care about healthy watersheds have lost a champion. I think that everyone who knew Jim will greatly miss him, and all would tell you that their lives were enriched by his friendship.

Mike Morrison, Pacific Rivers Board Chair

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

We want to thank our many supporters for giving us the information, inspiration, motivation, and yes, funding, to tackle the most important river and watershed issues of our day. We could not do it without you.

OUR MISSION

The mission of Pacific Rivers is to protect and restore the watershed ecosystems of the West to ensure river health, biodiversity and clean water for present and future generations.

OUR VISION

A future where healthy communities have access to clean, cool drinking water free from chemicals, and people can play in rivers and streams. A future where watersheds that store carbon are resilient to warming temperatures and other effects of climate change and are home to abundant populations of fish and aquatic wildlife.

PACIFIC RIVERS

PACIFICRIVERS.ORG
1001 SE Water Avenue, Suite 450
Portland, OR 97214
info@pacificrivers.org