

The Adipose

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WILD STEELHEAD COALITION

September, 2005

The State of the Wild Steelhead Coalition: Year 4

A little over four years ago an organization was formed by a group of conservation minded anglers that were concerned about what was happening to wild steelhead. The catalyst for this concern was the closures of some popular C&R fisheries in a few North Sound rivers of Puget Sound. While many of these anglers were disappointed about the closures, they were supported as the right thing to do. But the major rub was: "What got us here in the first place?" Immediately the first focus was to simply stop killing them. The WSC since has been very successful in reducing harvest, but even more important was the fact it rallied many concerned anglers to get involved and bring attention to the plight of wild steelhead and to move forward tackling the plethora of other issues that affect their abundance. Asking for "release of all wild steelhead no exceptions" is the easy part, but the big question is, are you willing to move forward on *all* the issues to make positive changes? It will take perseverance from our Board and membership to continue and celebrate all incremental victories along the way.

Organization

This is my second year as President of the WSC and I am still impressed with our Board's ability to work together and their willingness to tirelessly work on many issues and challenges facing wild steelhead.

This year we said thank you **Peter Dorn** for his two years of service as our VP of Fund Raising. Peter did an outstanding job putting together our first two fundraisers and organizing our appearances at the Fly Fishing Show and the Puyallup Sportsman Show which brought greater visibility to the plight of wild steelhead and a challenge to get involved for other anglers. Our old friend and seasoned veteran, **Les Johnson** has migrated from the Board to one of our valued Trustees position, thanks Les for your continued service. We have also gained some new Board members to the fold who are infusing some new energy; thanks to **John Case**, VP Communications, **Brian Simonseth**, VP of Education and **Jim Schmitz**, Secretary. They have stepped up to help lead the organization. But, we still need members to volunteer and serve as board members, to ensure the board remains energetic in the future to continue our mission for wild steelhead abundance. Our Regional Representative positions expanded with the addition of **Michael Mathis**, expanding into the Region 1 territory of Eastern Washington and Idaho to help further the goals of WSC. Mike has been a very proactive Rep and has increased our membership single-handily as well as promoting WSC's Mission. We also continue to have a strong membership which continues to grow with individuals who have volunteered to get involved and help the Board. The WSC has also moved it's meeting location to the Center for Urban Horticulture at the Uni-

versity of Washington Campus. Our next Membership meeting is scheduled for October 5, please join us for a great program.

Steelhead Summit Alliance (SSA)
The WSC has also hosted two more Steelhead Summits with organizations and clubs from the Northwest and British Columbia. The next Summit is scheduled for December 3rd in Portland, Oregon and will be hosted by the Native Fish Society and Trout Unlimited. These Summits continue to grow and make progress in creating a unified voice for steelhead. Five SSA policy papers are presently going through the approval process. They include Endangered Species Act (ESA), River Flows, Passage Barriers, Hydro-power and Riparian Zones. The ESA policy paper has been approved by over twenty organizations with more to come and was sent to National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in regards to NOAA's Fisheries proposed policy to list hatchery salmonids the same as wild salmonids. The **Steelhead Management Policy Plan** has been approved by the SSA Committee and is currently out to SSA Members for review. Other SSA Policy Papers under development include By Catch, and Hatchery Reform. A SSA Steering Committee has been formed as well as Subject Committees regarding Education and Public Outreach, Wild Salmonid Policy, Enforcement and Atlantic Salmon/Aquaculture. A special thanks to **Dave Bailey** who con-

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tinues to be our Summit Coordinator, **Dick Burge** for organizing the speakers and preparing the Summit agenda and **Jack Berryman** for serving as Facilitator.

Conservation

The WSC Board of Directors has also focused on many conservation issues this year that will benefit wild steelhead. The following are some highlights:

- The WSC produced and sent a letter to the Washington State Governor Christine Gregoire requesting improved conservation measures and protection for wild steelhead as well as setting the stage to meet with the Governor's staff to discuss wild steelhead issues in the future.
- Produced and sent a letter to Restaurants Unlimited, requesting that they discontinue the sale of wild steelhead on all of their restaurant's menus immediately and in the future we also urged a meeting to educate their leadership on the plight of wild steelhead.
- Worked and partnered with American Rivers in their annual listing of America's Ten Most Endangered Rivers, which this year featured the Skykomish River. The listing of the Sky will bring attention to the continuing loss of habitat and run away development in the Skykomish River valley.
- Developed and provided in-depth Comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Proposed Skagit River Steelhead Rearing and Ac-

climation Facility. The WSC chief concern with the DEIS is, in fact, its failure to explicitly present clear and convincing evidence that the proposed hatchery acclimation project reflects an effective implementation of main Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) principals for hatchery reform which include clearly stated goals, scientifically defensible programs and informed decision making.

- Submitted Editorial to media and attended hearings to oppose the issue of NOAA Fisheries and the Bush administration's proposal to lump wild steelhead and salmon together with hatchery fish, and if accepted, would seriously erode protections for wild steelhead and salmon under the Endangered Species Act.
- Traveled, wrote and testified against the Stohrdahl mine expansion proposal along the East Fork of the Lewis River in SW Washington which will further degrade habitat along this famous steelhead river.
- Provided two \$500 scholarship awards; One to **Michael Dauber**, a doctoral student at the University of Washington. Michael is continuing the project started by Jennifer McLean on steelhead genetics in Forks Creek, a tributary of the Willapa River. The second scholarship went to **Jon Honea**, Center for Streamside Studies and College of Forest Resources, University of Washington for his doctoral dissertation: *Effect*

of Marine-Derived Nutrients on Macroinvertebrate Production in Salmon Spawning Streams. The Board also voted unanimously to donate and become a member of the **Stilly Snohomish Fisheries Task Force** supporting their work on habitat enhancement and also renewed the WSC membership in the **Washington Wildlife and Recreation Coalition**, recognizing their work in preserving public access and habitat. And the Board agreed to support and co-sponsor the **Skagit watershed carcass distribution program** and to pay for transportation fees to aid the program (\$250.00)

Harvest

Revision 2 of WSC second white paper titled: "**The Status of Wild Steelhead in Western Washington**" and the **WSC Steelhead Management Plan** is going to print this month. This information has been shared with the WDFW and the plan will be utilized for crafting input to the **WDFW Steelhead Management Plan**. A earlier draft of the WSC plan was completed and a link to it was placed on the WSC web site for our membership to download and offer input. The WSC Plan is the also the foundation for the **Steelhead Summit Alliance Steelhead Management Policy Plan**. This has been a huge undertaking and I would like to publicly recognize **Dick Burge's** strong resolve and thank **Nate Mantua, Jack Berryman** and member **Larry Doyle** for their support in development of this important document.

The Board was also very busy with work and traveling to testify against the proposed raising of the 2% commercial by-catch of ESA listed wild steelhead to 6% on the Colum-

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bia River spring Chinook commercial fishery. Even though there was disappointment with Washington's Commission vote to raise the rate to 4%, Board Member **Todd Ripley** tirelessly traveled to Oregon and hooked up with our Oregon Regional Rep **Shane Stewart**, Trustee **Bill Bakke** and others to convince the Oregon Commissioners not to raise the by catch impact rate. The good news was that our strong resolve convinced Oregon's Fish and Wildlife Commission to decide against raising the impact rate, and Washington was forced to go along with Oregon's decision. I would like to recognize **Todd Ripley's** dedication to see through this issue.

General

The WSC second fundraising banquet was a huge success with Trey Combs providing a great slide presentation on steelhead in Russia. **Bill Redman** received the first **WSC Conservation Award**, recognizing his fine work and perseverance as Chair of the Federation of Fly Fishers Steelhead Committee. Also many thanks to the individuals, shops and companies who donated to our successful event! The money generated by this fundraiser has been a big help with the WSC's continuing working on our mission. **We look forward and hope you will join us at our third fundraising banquet on November 19 at the Sheraton in Bellevue, WA.**

The newsletter of the WSC, "The Adipose" continues to bring information of what is going on in the organization and provides information on issues regarding wild steelhead. It was also decided this year by the Board to continue "The Adipose" in a bimonthly format. Beside his outstanding duties as the WSC Treasurer, I would like to thank and recognize **Bob Young** for formatting and sending out "The Adipose"

Wild steelhead are also benefiting from **Abel Quality Products**, which is offering a collectors' edition of 100 numbered Super 7 reels artistically anodized to replicate the endangered fish. Abel steelhead reels, inspired by author/artist **James Prosek**, will include his laser engraved signature. The reel will be accompanied by a signed copy of Prosek's book, *Fly-Fishing the 41st Parallel*. Abel is donating a portion of the proceeds from the sale of this collectors' edition reel to assist the efforts of the **Wild Steelhead Coalition, Kirkland, Wash.**, to further their efforts in sponsoring and sustaining the Steelhead Summit Alliance. The organization has produced "position papers" on specific issues directly impacting wild steelhead. Thanks Abel for stepping forward to support wild steelhead!

We would like to recognize many who have donated to the organization including **Paul Utz** and the **Lower Columbia Fly Fishers**. And finally, we would like to thank our membership and other conservationists who have supported the WSC over the course of the year. Your time and contributions are making a difference for wild steelhead. On to year 5!

Sincerely,

Rich Simms
2004-2005 Board President, Wild Steelhead Coalition



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The habits and life histories of coast trout

by John McMillan

“Thoroughly sound information on the habits and life histories of coast trout (winter steelhead) is extremely scarce.....and rivers present a fairly wide diversity of conditions, and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the habits of the fish vary more or less proportionately. Eventuallydetailed information about each major watershed will be available....and some fortunate being will be able to sit down at his desk and work out the complete picture.”

Roderick Haig-Brown - *The Western Angler* 1946

The sun finally emerged after eleven consecutive days of rain. Its splintered rays sliced through a series of small holes along a bank of dark grey clouds. It was early March and a brisk wind swept across the surface of a small rainforest river as I waded upstream in search of steelhead whose spawning I had been following for three months. The continual hard rains had given way to showers four days earlier. The rivers had receded enough to warrant hope that the water clarity would allow a continuance of weekly observations.

On a hunch I headed to a series of shallow riffles where I had observed a sentinel male steelhead holding near a redd in mid-January, waiting for his next female to arrive. I approached the stream through a bramble of salmonberry and quietly sunk down behind a mossy boulder I had come to consider my base camp. I was several miles up from the river mouth, just below a tributary junction, far from where most people were spending their Sunday afternoon.

Peeking over the boulder, four steelhead were visible in the shallow water holding over a patch of gravel about five feet upstream. One was the old, dark, redd-striped sentinel male of about 19lbs flanking the side of a fresh bright 15lb female. Two smaller males held about two feet below the pair. I watched as the female excavated her redd area infrequently. Then the large male moved alongside the female and performed a series of shudders near her lateral line. Within a few minutes the female sank into the redd pit, arched her back, and opened her mouth. Simultaneously the large male dropped into the redd. Just as he stiffened, mouth agape, the two trailing males surged forward pushing a wake of water and filled the redd with milt. The white cloud floated downstream and quickly dissipated. This took place another couple of times over the course of the next hour.

During my first year on the Olympic Peninsula I returned to this location several times each month, inspired by the solitude and innocent observations of wild steelhead spawning in a little visited watershed. As I ate lunch in early July, several months after starting my visits to this small river, I reflected on one profound moment earlier in the spawning season - the time when I began to understand the complexity of the great fish we call *Oncorhynchus mykiss*.

It was the second week in April. Spring sunshine had warmed the previous winter flows to 54F during the middle of the day. I again sat behind the mossy boulder watching steelhead in clear water that was barely deep enough to cover their backs. Once again there was a female steelhead with one large male

steelhead flanking her side. Three smaller males finned directly below them. The large male then chased yet another smaller male steelhead and returned to the female's side; then he suddenly darted towards something else. Despite the clear water I could not see another fish. As I wondered, I finally saw it: a small fish sitting in plain view about five feet in front of me. It was a rainbow trout, a relatively large one about 16". Before I could collect my thoughts the water boiled as all the male steelhead and the rainbow trout swarmed the female's sides and flooded the redd with milt. Carpe diem.

I wondered which fish fertilized the female. Was it a single fish, the proverbial lucky Joe? Or was it a conglomerate of all the males, a fertile shake of evolutionarily-determined life histories that produced a super *mykiss* prepared to survive winter rainforest floods and summer droughts?

Then I thought about the trout. Was this an anomaly, or typical? Or somewhere between? Subsequently I have been fortunate enough to observe numerous matings between female steelhead and male trout. While I have not arrived at many answers, I now understand the reproductive line between steelhead and rainbow trout is grey, not black and white.

As evening arrived that night, I sat along the riverbank and listened to the fading chatter of a water ouzel. A nearby gallery of alder trees swayed in unison with a slight, but steady breeze, and I thought: how amazing the river creatures are and the gift of lessons that rainforest rivers provide. With many stream's headwaters in pristine condition

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protected within the Olympic National Park, the result is relatively healthy salmon populations. There is no better place to study salmon in the lower 48.

Since that first observation eight years ago, I have logged thousands of hours snorkeling, observing, and counting salmon in these wild rivers as a biologist with the Wild Salmon Center. I have come to believe these fish and their rivers, with their relative health in numbers and abundance of exceptional habitat, live outside the proverbial box science has sometimes created around salmonids. We still have a long way to go to understand the diverse relationships between life histories and habitats Haig-Brown identified as being a primary limiting factor to understanding coastal trout in 1946. This will continue to be true for all salmonids until science puts more emphasis on classic field observations, and less on science that is isolated from the natural ecology of the animal studied. I also believe that when a more complete picture of *O. mykiss* is eventually developed, part of that picture will come from these rainforest rivers. The peninsula is, as described by Norman Mclean, "a world still wet with dew."

*John McMillan studies the ecology of the Olympic Peninsula's rainforest rivers for the non-profit Wild Salmon Center. John's field work has been central to the Wild Salmon Center's Cascadia Salmon Biodiversity Program, and over the past 8 years he has logged thousands of hours snorkeling, observing, and counting salmon and steelhead on the Olympic Peninsula's west-side rivers. John was a featured speaker at the most recent Steelhead Summit Alliance meeting where he reported on his observations of spawning interactions between resident and anadromous forms of *O. mykiss*. For more in-*

formation about the Wild Salmon Center and their activities, see <http://www.wildsalmoncenter.org>. - Nate Mantua, VP of Science and Education

News Briefs:

WSC Provides two donations

The WSC Board has voted unanimously to provide two donations that will benefit wild steelhead.

A donation of \$500 has been sent to "The Osprey" The Federation of Fly Fishers acclaimed steelhead conservation newsletter. This newsletter has done an outstanding job of providing information and providing important attention to issues regarding wild steelhead.

A donation of \$3000 as also been made by the WSC to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to support **Acoustical Tagging of Steelhead in Puget Sound**. Currently Puget Sound wild steelhead are in steep decline, the causes are not know, but marine survival is suspect as the main culprit. The WSC also challenges other organizations and clubs to donate to this study so we better understand why wild steelhead continue to "crash" in the Puget Sound basin. For more information please read the memo by the Steelhead Trout Club Below. If your club or organization would like to donate please contact Russ Fuller or Bob Leland at the WDFW.

Subject: Steelhead Trout Club Support of Acoustic Tagging of Steelhead

The Steelhead Trout Club is concerned that both hatchery and wild Steelhead in Puget Sound are in steep decline while at the same time coastal Steelhead are in better condition. The causes are not known but it is suspected that marine survival in Puget Sound is a major factor.

The Pacific Ocean Shelf Tracking (POST) program and other installed acoustic sensors throughout Puget Sound, the Straits of Juan De Fuca, and Canadian waters offer the opportunity for us to monitor the out migration of tagged Steelhead to determine their survival rate.

We have developed jointly with WDF&W, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the Squaxin tribe a research program which consists of tagging 50 each of the following Steelhead stocks in 2006 contingent on obtaining funding: Green river hatchery winter Steelhead, Green river wild winter Steelhead, Puyallup hatchery winter Steelhead, Puyallup river wild winter Steelhead, and Nisqually wild winter Steelhead.

The WDF&W has agreed to fund \$15,000 which will cover purchase of acoustic tags for one of the above projects and also to train personnel and capture and install tags in both wild and hatchery Green river winter Steelhead and to collect and analyze data to determine Steelhead out migration success. WDF&W will also collect data from the installed sensors and de-

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termine Steelhead out migration survival in inland waters.

The Corps of Engineers has agreed to loan and assist the WDF&W in installing sensors in the Green river to monitor in-river out migration survival rate of Steelhead.

It is understood that the Squaxin tribal biologist will assist WDF&W in training personnel and in initial installation of the Tags.

It is also understood that the Puyallup tribe is considering funding and tagging hatchery and wild winter Steelhead.

The Steelhead Trout Club will fund \$15,000 to purchase tags needed for Green river hatchery winter Steelhead. We will work with WDF&W to obtain matching funds from the POST program or other sources to cover wild Green river winter Steelhead. We feel that it is imperative that we monitor the survival of wild Green river winter Steelhead (which is the strongest stock in Puget Sound) to be used as a comparison to other stocks which are in serious decline.

The comprehensive array of sensors throughout Puget Sound and Canada offer us the opportunity to discover the causes of Steelhead declines. The Steelhead Trout Club of Washington by member vote approved our financial contribution of \$15,000 towards this vital and significant project.

Hal Boynton-Steelhead Trout Club Special Projects Manager
Russ Simonson-President

Carcass Distribution in the Skagit River

Bt Brian Simonseth

The Fidalgo Fly Fishers coordinate the carcass distribution effort with the Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) Marblemount Hatchery, and the U.S. Forest Service. The cooperative effort started in 1996 and distributes between 8,000 and 25,000 carcasses per year.

Since the project began in 1996, more than 60,000 carcasses have been distributed, including more than 10,000 in 2004. Working as volunteers, members of the Fidalgo Fly Fishers helped distribute 1,600 King salmon carcasses in the Baker River in 2004. The Baker River partnership with the US Forest Service is new since 2003. Forest Service helicopters were used to

reach the upper sections of the river as volunteers filled the hopper with up to 50 frozen King salmon per load.

This year we have teamed up with two more organizations Wild Steelhead Coalition & Puget Sound Anglers for the betterment of the Skagit Watershed Basin.

Last year we distributed over 10,000 carcasses though out the Skagit Watershed Basin. Hitting over 15 streams, rivers and creeks with valuable nutrients for fish and aquatic live; which makes the whole system just that much better.

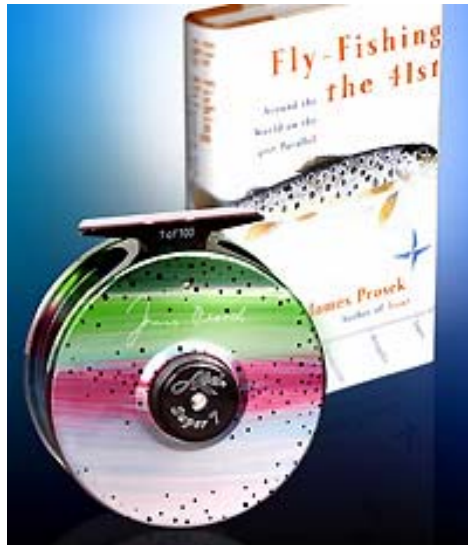
Volunteers from both these new groups and donation from both will be big asset this year with distributing carcass from September thru February. In the past years there were only 10 of us that help out but with the new groups there well be 2 times that number and the knowledge that it will bring will be tremendous.

Any body interested in helping during the week please get in touch with Brian Simonseth at Bsimonseth@verizon.net

More on this months program

Reforming hatchery practices requires a watershed-based approach to management of anadromous salmonids, one that takes into account all the factors that affect a species (the "H's" of habitat, harvest and hatcheries). Recognizing this, the state and tribal co-managers of Washington's salmon and steelhead asked the Hatchery Scientific Review Group (HSRG) to work with them to develop tools for managing hatcheries in this new context. Technical discussions in 2004 with Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission (NWIFC) scientists resulted in one such tool: the "All-H Hatchery Analyzer" (AHA). This presentation will use steelhead case studies to demonstrate how AHA helps inform decision-making. Paul Seidel represents WDFW on the HSRG; Andy Appleby has taken the lead in using AHA to evaluate WDFW's hatchery programs.

Inspired by James Prosek
**ABEL'S STEELHEAD CONSERVATION REEL
TO BENEFIT WILD STEELHEAD COALITION**



CAMARILLO, Calif. – Wild steelhead, those sea-run rainbow trout that can rip line from a reel faster than a freight train, cause an angler's heart to flutter and knees to buckle, will benefit from a collectors' edition of 100 numbered Super 7 reels artistically anodized to replicate the endangered fish. Abel's steelhead reels, inspired by author/artist James Prosek, will include his laser engraved signature.

The Abel reel will be accompanied by a signed copy of Prosek's book, *Fly-Fishing the 41st Parallel*. "Abel Quality Products will donate a portion of the proceeds from the sale of this collectors' edition reel to assist the efforts of the Wild Steelhead Coalition, headquartered in Kirkland, Wash." Said Steve Abel, president. Prosek, who has authored and/or illustrated *Trout an Illustrated History*, *Trout of the World*, *Joe and Me*, *Fly-Fishing the 41st Parallel*, *Early Love and Brook Trout* and a children's book, *A Good Day's Fishing*, has been called the James Audubon of fish. The Super 7 reel will be machined with a solid frame to accommodate the steelhead graphics and the laser engraved signature. It holds a 7-weight line with 200 yards of Micron backing; an 8-weight with 175 yards.

Proceeds from the sale of the limited edition reels will be used by the Wild Steelhead Coalition to further their efforts in sponsoring and sustaining the Steelhead Summit Alliance. The organization has produced "position papers" on specific issues directly impacting wild steelhead. These issues include *habitat*, *harvest*, *hatcheries*, *hydropower*, *enforcement*, *education and research*, according to Jack W. Berryman, Ph.D., past-president of the organization. "We invite our fellow fishers to join or make a tax deductible donation to this worthy cause," said Abel. For additional information on the Wild Steelhead Coalition, log on to www.wildsteelheadcoalition.com.

The collectors' Edition Prosek signature steelhead reel by Abel including *Fly-Fishing the 41st Parallel* is priced at \$1,000. Prosek-designed limited edition steelhead reels are available at authorized Abel dealers, at www.abelreels.com or by calling 866.511.7444.

SUPPORT WILD STEELHEAD

Wild Steelhead Coalition
218 Main St. Box 264
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The Wild Steelhead Coalition (WSC) is an organization dedicated to increasing the return of wild steelhead to the waters and rivers of the Pacific Northwest.



Sept. 2005

Meeting Announcement

**Wednesday, Oct. 5th
7:00-9:30 pm**

Again, this month our meeting place will be at the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture on the Union Bay Campus. We will be gathering in the Classroom of Isaacson Hall. Directions available and maps with driving directions (as PDFs) and the buildings are on the web at: <http://depts.washington.edu/urbhort/html/info/facilities.html>

Our program this month will be "The All-H Hatchery Analyzer (AHA): A New Tool for Science-Based Decision-Making about Hatcheries" More on the program on page 6.

Speakers: Paul Seidel and Andy Appleby, WDFW