

The Adipose

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WILD STEELHEAD COALITION

April, 2006

The President's Run

When I reviewed our WSC membership list recently, I was not only truly amazed by the geographic diversity of our membership, but also our membership's diversity of experience and passion for steelhead. I feel honored and privileged to lead an organization with such depth and skill.

As President, I often run into many who have heard about our organization and want to know more about us or want to share a piece of information or an opinion about a specific steelhead issue. Sometimes it is a positive experience and sometimes it turns into a challenging discussion, but I always chock it up to a positive experience and an opportunity to learn another perspective. On a recent steelhead adventure, I had just completed fishing for the day and was tugging at my wading boots and enjoying the last moments of a good day as a vehicle pulled up behind me. A fellow fisher jumped out of his rig and we exchanged the typical inquires about our luck or lack thereof for the day, and river conditions. He spied the WSC sticker on my camper and asked me about the organization and what we were about. After providing him a snapshot, he

began providing some pointed opinions--by the way, I don't believe I have ever met a fisher without an opinion, especially about what an organization should be doing--"You know...", oh, oh here it comes, I thought. "You guys seem to do a lot of work, but what are your accomplishments?" I quickly rattled of some examples and offered to send him some info, but he replied, "No, I'll look ya' up on your website." We wished each other good luck and he sped off.

I finished packing my gear away, and as the last rays of sun filtered through the moss laden trees I got into my vehicle to begin my drive home. On the way home I found myself reflecting over the fisher's comments from our exchange. I formulated a couple of important items to keep in mind: we live, unfortunately, in a "have it now society" where expectations are often formed in which accomplishments are often synonymous with the total end result, poof! All the problems will be solved if you can just do this. In the grand scheme of steelhead conservation I have learned that accomplishments are incremental and you build on those accomplishments, no matter how small, to create positive change always with the big picture in mind. But as I reflected further, it oc-

curred to me that many people often miss our organization's biggest accomplishment. As a humble organization we have brought a tremendous amount of visibility, awareness and exposure to the plight of wild steelhead! And that simple BIG accomplishment has created an opportunity for us to achieve success in increasing the return of wild steelhead.

It has taken a tremendous amount of work but when I am on the river with its awesome surroundings, stepping into a "fishy" steelhead run with its relentless force, to make the confident cast and suddenly have the fish take, feel the power of that first run and admire it as another experience captured in my memory, it is worth it. And when I come home to have my young son Derek ask me if I caught a fish and I can tell him a story of the river and its fish, see his eyes full of wonder, I hope the work I continue today will afford him the opportunity in the future to catch a wild steelhead and gently release it back into its home. I hope you will find the time to join me and continue our work together.

Sincerely,
Rich Simms
President

March 1, 2005 Member Meeting Presentation at the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture, Union Bay Campus

Guest Speaker: Dr. Todd R. Seamons, School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences, University of Washington

Title: On steelhead repeat spawning, mature male parr and hybridization with cutthroat: Lessons from DNA analysis II

Description: Dr. Seamons' presentation focused on three interesting and important biological characteristics of steelhead populations: (1) the lifetime reproductive success of repeat-spawners vs. one time-spawners; (2) the reproductive success of non- or pre-anadromous males; and (3) natural hybridization with cutthroat trout.

Biography: Todd Seamons is a post-doctoral research associate at the University of Washington School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences and is currently investigating genetic interactions between wild and hatchery steelhead. His recently completed Ph. D. dissertation research was focused on the reproductive biology and reproductive success of wild steelhead. When he's not sampling steelhead for research, he can be found 'sampling' steelhead for pleasure in his favorite local river, the River Nunya.

Abstract: The steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) population of Snow Creek, Washington provided an ideal place to study variation in reproductive success. A permanent weir, operated by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), prevents any unassisted migration of steelhead allowing us to sample all returning adults for DNA analysis. Using the DNA analysis returning adult offspring were genetically matched to parents across 19 brood years. This allowed direct enumeration of all offspring and quantification of variation in lifetime reproductive success. These data were applied to three topics: repeat spawning, early maturity and hybridization with cutthroat.

Repeat spawning: Simply because they spawn twice (or more), all else equal, repeat spawning steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) are expected to have higher lifetime reproductive success than those that only spawn once. In addition, the larger size of repeat spawners is hypothesized to confer advantages during and after spawning in terms of reproductive success. Larger females may produce more or larger eggs; larger males may have a size advantage during competition for ripe females. Furthermore, one may also hypothesize that repeat spawning individuals may also gain an advantage from their prior knowledge of the spawning stream. Thus, we hypothesized that repeat-spawning steelhead

should, on average, have more offspring on average than one-time spawners; that they would produce more than twice the number of offspring as one-time spawning steelhead due to hypothesized advantages; and finally, repeat-spawning fish would, on average, have more offspring their second time spawning than their first time. We tested these hypotheses by calculating the lifetime reproductive success of one-time and repeat spawning steelhead for 19 brood years from Snow Creek, Washington. Lifetime reproductive success of repeat spawning females was almost exactly twice that of one-time spawners, and repeat spawners produced no more offspring the second spawning than the first suggesting that females gain no advantage in repeat spawning. Male repeat spawning individuals produced 2.4X the number of adult offspring as one-time spawning males. Surprisingly, repeat spawning males failed to produce any offspring the first time they spawned, instead producing all adult offspring the second year of spawning. Both of these results suggest that repeat spawning males gain some advantage from repeat spawning.

Early maturity: Early maturity in salmon and steelhead is thought to be a result of both genes and environment. If one has the genes and environment favoring early maturity it will occur. Early maturity for males is common in salmonids, mostly in iteroparous (those that can spawn more than once) species such as steelhead. Little published data exist on steelhead early maturity, though it is commonly known among hatchery personnel that some males mature early in the hatchery. Using my parentage data I have inferred the presence of non-anadromous early maturing males in Snow Creek. Furthermore, their lifetime reproductive success is quite clearly related to the sex ratio of anadromous males to anadromous females: when the sex ratio is female biased mature parr are more successful at producing offspring.

Hybridization: Steelhead are known to commonly hybridize with coastal cutthroat (*Oncorhynchus clarki*) throughout their native ranges. Adult hybrids are difficult to visually identify as evidenced by two fish sampled in Snow Creek. Both fish were visually identified as cutthroat by WDFW personnel. One was later genetically identified as a steelhead, the other was genetically identified as a hybrid. The level of hybridization is a concern since hybrids are not protected by the Endangered Species Act.

For an interesting collection of photographs and short film clips of spawning salmonids, see: <http://www.zoo.utoronto.ca/manuesteve/>

Regional Report

Mother Nature continues her unstable attitude here in Forks. Long spells of incessant rains followed by weeks of clear, cold weather have left Olympic Peninsula steelhead anglers of all gear types scrambling to adjust to some extremes in water conditions this season. Regardless of a given angler's gear choice, there has been an often-heard question amongst anglers this year of "Where are the fish?"

Perhaps most evident in the Quillayute system, the wild fluctuations in water levels may have scooted many fish well upstream of traditional angling / spawning areas. Many who frequent the coastal streams seem to report an overall lack of numbers and spawning activity in traditional areas. From my own observations, several of the areas in the lower section of the Sol Duc that should have a fair amount of spawning activity by now are barely being used. Similar reports are coming from the Bogachiel / Calawah.

Are the numbers of fish returning down? Or have the fish simply chosen to spawn either further upstream or even within some tributaries given this season's water conditions? Spawning counts from year-end may shed some more light on this puzzle and we're hoping that pre-season forecast were not too far off and direct / indirect harvest by both sport and tribal fishers is not going to bring final escapements too far down this season.

Regarding the tribal fishery in the Quillayute. There are a number of new fishers, particularly those utilizing the more effective drift gillnetting, participating in this year's fishery. The Olympic Peninsula Guides' Association (OPGA) is alarmed by this fact given a slightly expanded schedule for tribal anglers this year. There is a growing fear that the "day" quota is not accurately taking this increase in effort into account and the OPGA will be asking the state to work out some form of an agreement with the tribal anglers to return to a "number" quota in future years to help prevent any possible over harvest.

There has also been much talk regarding the new management plan in the Hoh that closes the tribal fishery early and has moved the river to a selective sport fishery March 1. The plan appears to be working well with seemingly improved numbers of fish passing through this spring. Enforcement has been working hard to make sure that the new regulations are adhered to and those anglers not in compliance have found out first hand about the stepped-up efforts of enforcement personnel.

One big sticking point with many anglers regarding the new agreement on the Hoh is the fact that the river remained open at all to a sports harvest this season based on recent returns and failure to make escapement by nearly 1000 fish last season. While many in the Forks area are optimistic about the new plan helping push escapement levels back above goals, expect a big push for more restrictive harvest / sport impact from many in the sportfishing / conservation circles if the river fails to meet escapement once again in 2006.

Bob Ball

WSC Region 6 Representative



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Wild Steelhead Coalition Pledges \$6,000 to support Acoustic Tagging study for Skagit River Wild Steelhead smolts by *Nate Mantua, WSC VP for Science*

The Wild Steelhead Coalition is spending \$6,000 to purchase 20 acoustic tags that will be surgically implanted into wild steelhead smolts on the Skagit River this spring. The goals of this project are to identify in-river and early-marine migration patterns and survival rates for Skagit River wild steelhead smolts. This steelhead tagging project is one of several similar studies planned for Puget Sound and Georgia Basin salmonids this spring, and is being done in a collaborative effort between the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Seattle City Light, the Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA Fisheries, the University of Washington School of Aquatic and Fisheries Science, and the Pacific Ocean Salmon Tracking project. Similar studies using the same acoustic receivers and tags have been instrumental in identifying complex migratory behaviors of Puget Sound bull trout. It is hoped that the current steelhead project will help scientists identify the survival bottlenecks that have contributed to the very low smolt-to-adult survival rates that have plagued Puget Sound and Georgia Basin steelhead in the past decade, and in doing so will assist in the development of effective steelhead recovery plans for Puget Sound and Georgia Basin stocks.

For more information on the Pacific Ocean Shelf Tracking (POST) project, see their web-site at: <http://www.postcoml.org/>.

10th Annual Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission Steelhead Meeting

The 10th Annual West Coast Steelhead meeting was held at Fort Worden in Port Townsend, WA, on March 7-9. Presentations covered a wide range of topics, including:

- steelhead stock status reports from California, Oregon, Idaho, Washington, British Columbia, and Alaska
- the results of acoustic tracking studies for wild and hatchery steelhead smolts from several British Columbia rivers

- information about patterns of steelhead productivity and their possible links with climate variations
- hatchery-wild steelhead interactions
- kelt reconditioning studies in the Columbia River basin
- genetic relationships among resident and anadromous *O. mykiss* in the Green River and Cedar River basins
- hatchery reform efforts in Washington State

More details about the meeting's presentations will be posted on the PSMFC web-site at: <http://www.psmfc.org/steelhead/>.



Below is a brief on the proposed amendment to the WSC By-Laws with regards to Presidential authority. If you have any questions or concerns please contact **Jim Schmitz** @ lostriver99@yahoo.com.

Article X - By-Laws Amendment Proposal for Presidential Authority.

The WSC and active board members have proposed to seek a 2/3 approval on a provision which would grant the acting President of the Wild Steelhead Coalition the authority to make timely decisions which would benefit the organization. The authority is to be granted only when something is brought before the President which can not wait for the acting BOD or general membership's approval.

Translating Passion into Action *by Rob Masonis*

Passion for the protection and restoration of wild *o. mykiss* is what each member of the Wild Steelhead Coalition shares; it is the reason the WSC exists. That passion has undoubtedly been stoked by our own personal angling experiences, those infrequent (I'll speak for myself here) but enthralling moments when we have felt a wild steelhead's power at the end of our line and observed its beauty close-up. We would all like to have such experiences more frequently, and we want to ensure that future anglers will have an opportunity to catch and release wild steelhead.

Our shared passion has brought us together, but that is only one step along the path to wild steelhead conservation. If we are to achieve meaningful change in critical aspects of wild steelhead management, we must do more than just share information and experiences within the small WSC universe. It was the recognition of this fact that led the WSC to sponsor and organize a series of summits to bring together diverse organizations interested in wild steelhead conservation.

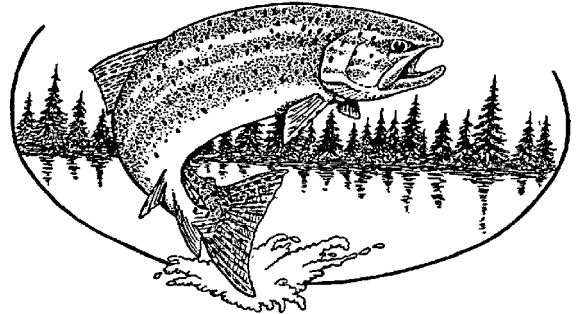
From those summits emerged the Steelhead Summit Alliance, a multi-state network of organizations concerned about the future of wild steelhead. The Alliance is oozing with potential. To be sure, there have been times when the Alliance groups have coordinated to influence key wild steelhead management decisions, but much of its potential remains untapped at a time when the need for effective advocacy is acute.

A few years ago, conservation groups working in Olympia were facing a similar challenge, how to be more effective in the face of seemingly mounting opposition to their agenda. Frustrated with the lack of progress in the state legislature, so they decided to do business differently. First, they decided to unite and form a functioning coalition, much like the Steelhead Summit Alliance. Second, they decided to select just three or four pressing issues. Third, they asked each coalition member to commit to activating their members on those issues. Finally, they have dedicated themselves to build meaningful relationships with key decision-makers.

This has proven a recipe for success and offers some guidance for how the Steelhead Summit Alliance. This past session, the Washington State passed three of the coalition's four priority bills. Such success would not have been possible without the collective efforts of coalition members and disciplined campaign execution.

The Steelhead Summit Alliance has the potential for similar success. If we can focus our efforts on a few issues, develop winning strategies and tactics, and get the commitment of Alliance member groups to execute those strategies, we will translate our passion into action and leave a legacy of wild steelhead conservation of which we can all be proud. It's time to ramp it up, and that will be a main focus of the next Steelhead Summit Alliance meeting on May 20th in Bellevue.

Rob Masonis is NW Executive Director of American Rivers and a WSC Trustee.



We welcome the following new members:

Mark Homeyer, Vancouver, WA
Alex Svendsen, Seattle, WA
Michael Masters, Bothell, WA
Floyd Cooper, Monroe, WA
Nobuo Nodera Sayama, Sautamy, Japan
Nathaniel Reed, Hobo Sound, FL
Tom White, Seattle, WA
Keith Talley, North Fork, ID
Bob Nall, Carmen, ID
Ed Link, North Fork, ID
Sloan Craven, Pullman, WA
Joe Carlig, El Cerrito, CA
Brian Duim, Bellingham, WA
Pacific Northwest Appraisals, Everett, WA

WSC signs on to letter in support of WILD SKY WILDERNESS ACT. Below is the final copy, including the 22 signatories which has been sent to Representative Rick Larsen and Senator Patty Murray.

Tom Uniack
Conservation Director
Washington Wilderness Coalition
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206-633-1996 FAX
tom@wawild.org

March 15, 2006

The Honorable Rick Larsen
United States House of Representatives
107 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Larsen:

As sport fishing and fish conservation organizations representing thousands of Washington citizens who rely on healthy local fish populations for recreation, enjoyment, sustenance, livelihood and as an important part of our quality of life, we enthusiastically support your efforts to pass the Wild Sky Wilderness Act (HR 851).

Designating this area as Wilderness would prevent future damage to this critical fish habitat from road building, logging and other development. Fine sediments from development have led to the choking or burying of the delicate gravels that trout, char and salmon require for spawning beds. Loss of spawning habitat has already devastated many native Puget Sound Basin fish populations. Silt and flow disturbances can also reduce populations of the aquatic insects upon which trout and salmon feed. Roads and poorly designed culverts can also act as barriers to juvenile and adult fish migration, increase water temperature and alter stream flow regimes.

Currently the headwater streams and the North Fork Skykomish River flow directly through the Wild Sky Wilderness undamaged by roads and other development. This area is home to one of the best remaining strongholds of wild anadromous and resident freshwater fish in the Puget Sound basin. For example:

Steelhead are the most well-known and are abundant in winter and summer. These seagoing fish are sought after by anglers from throughout the nation and provide the predominant sport fishing opportunity on the North Fork. Steelhead are strong swimmers and are able to climb Bear Creek falls and reach the upper North Fork and many tributaries, which provide their

main spawning area. It is sometimes possible to see several dozen fish at once just below the blocking falls on such tributaries as West Cady, Goblin or Troublesome Creeks.

Bull Trout (Dolly Varden) are federally listed as a threatened species, and require extremely cold, pure water to spawn successfully. Bull Trout are considered by many fisheries biologists as an indicator species for very good habitat. The North Fork Skykomish high mountain spawning areas are one of their most important refuges in the Puget Sound Basin. The Bull trout populations here are among the healthiest in the Cascades and should continue to flourish if their habitat is protected.

Puget Sound Chinook Salmon (King), primarily use the lower three miles of the North Fork as spawning grounds with an occasional individual ascending Bear Creek Falls.

Pink Salmon runs occur in the North Fork Skykomish in odd-numbered years, with hundreds shimmering through the town of Index, amazing residents and visitors alike.

Coho (Silver) Salmon appear in the Skykomish in greater numbers than the other species and provide a great attraction for anglers from around the region every year. Coho spawn in the main stem of the North Fork Skykomish, in the lower reaches of Lewis, Howard and West Cady creeks and in other tributaries.

Chum Salmon are sometimes found in the North Fork but more often downstream. Chum are abundant and provide an important source of food for eagles and other wildlife.

The North Fork Skykomish is an unusual river in the Puget Sound Basin in that anadromous fish can swim so far up river. Bear Creek Falls, at 1400' elevation is a partial barrier, but many fish including Steelhead and Bull Trout climb it and continue as far as Deer Falls. At 2100' elevation, Deer Falls is only five miles from the Cascade crest. Other popular fishing holes abound and anglers are particularly drawn to Troublesome Hole and Stairstep Hole.

Fishing on the North Fork Skykomish and other Wild Sky area tributaries also generates economic benefits for local communities near these healthy streams and rivers. According to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, fishers, hunters and wildlife viewers spent a combined total of over \$2.18 billion annually in Washington State. In Snohomish County alone, a 2001 study by Dean Runyan and Associates totaled destination spending at \$509 million. Protecting the Wild Sky area will preserve and enhance these economic benefits not only for the local communities closest to the proposal but also for those throughout the Snohomish River Basin.

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Roadless and wild landscapes on our federal lands, like those found in the Wild Sky Wilderness proposal, represents some of the last pristine coldwater fish habitat left in the United States. The Wild Sky proposal will protect up to 25 miles of cold, clean water, sheltered by mature and old growth forests, providing excellent spawning and rearing habitat.

Thank you for your leadership and your concerted efforts toward protecting this special place. Please let us know how our organizations can be helpful in making the Wild Sky a reality this Congress.

Sincerely,

Gordan Mckay
Conservation Co-Chair
WA State Council, Federation of Fly Fishers

Kurt Beardslee
Executive Director
Washington Trout

Bruce McGlenn
President
Greater Seattle Chapter Izaak Walton League

Liz Hamilton
Executive Director
Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association

Lawrence B. Doyle
Trustee
Greywolf Fly Fishing Club

Joseph Bogaard
Western Washington Organizer
Save Our Wild Salmon

Terry Turner
President
Washington Council of Trout Unlimited

Greg Stephens
President
Little Bear Creek Protective Association

Steve Sande
President
Puget Sound Anglers

Bill Bakke
Executive Director
Native Fish Society

Beth Kuhn
Conservation Chair
NW Women Flyfishers

Paul Wells
President
Seattle Poggie Club

Bill Hall
President
Fourth Corner Fly Fishers

Craig McKelvey
President
Sky Valley Trout Unlimited

Rich Simms
President
Wild Steelhead Coalition

Gordan Mckay
Co Chair
Evergreen Flyfishing Club

SUPPORT WILD STEELHEAD

Wild Steelhead Coalition
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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.



Meeting Announcement

Meetings are held at the University of Washington's Center for Urban Horticulture on the Union Bay Campus on the first Wednesday on a bi-monthly schedule. The next meeting is scheduled for May 3rd. Links to maps with driving directions (as pdfs) and the buildings are on the web at: <http://depts.washington.edu/urbhort/html/info/facilities.html>

Our speaker next month will be Phil Davis of the Hoh River trust. More on the program next month.