



11-8-2008

Wild Steelhead Coalition  
Rich Simms  
President  
218 Main Street Box #264  
Kirkland, Washington 98003

Ed Cassano  
Director  
Seafood Watch  
Monterey Bay Aquarium  
886 Cannery Row  
Monterey, California 93940

RE: Wild Steelhead Listing Through Seafood Watch

Dear Mr. Cassano,

The Wild Steelhead Coalition is a non-profit, West Coast organization dedicated to increasing the return of wild steelhead to all Pacific Northwest waters. To help wild steelhead populations recover and rebuild their numbers, we request that Seafood Watch add wild steelhead to its list of seafood to avoid eating entirely.

Our extensive research – based on records and publications from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife – shows that wild steelhead populations throughout the Western United States are either listed as threatened, endangered or in decline under the Endangered Species Act.

Although most wild steelhead runs are in very poor health, these ocean-going fish are currently marketed to restaurants as sustainably harvested seafood. As a result, consumer demand encourages further over-fishing of wild steelhead, which are neither sustainably managed nor harvested.

Precise data for the number of wild steelhead sold to restaurants is unavailable to the public, but research shows that wild steelhead are served in restaurants coast to coast. Given the low number of these fish that remain today, any fish taken for commercial use is a threat to wild steelhead survival. Fortunately, wild steelhead can be kept off

restaurant menus if these threatened and endangered fish are included on the Seafood Watch list of seafood to avoid eating entirely.

For background on the problem, please consider these facts:

- Twelve out of fifteen major wild steelhead stocks are listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Additionally, most of the remaining wild steelhead stocks considered “healthy” by governmental agencies are a mere fraction of their historical numbers and are mostly in decline.
- In May 2007 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's National Marine Fisheries Service listed Puget Sound steelhead – once a famed and prolific wild steelhead population – as a threatened species.
- Data from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife reveals steady declines among wild steelhead populations in watersheds where the fish have yet to be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The Wild Steelhead Coalition currently encourages restaurants to remove wild steelhead from menus with letters explaining the crisis sent to restaurant owners and chefs. Our effort could be far more successful and wide reaching if wild steelhead were added to the Seafood Watch list of fish that should not be eaten.

Clearly, education is an important component of saving wild steelhead. Many remaining steelhead are hatchery raised and not wild steelhead. At the very least, restaurant owners and chefs must be able to identify a wild steelhead in order to avoid serving these fish to patrons. The difference is easy to discern: the adipose fin, located directly behind the dorsal fin, is removed from all hatchery-reared fish before their release. A wild steelhead retains its adipose fin. Only fish with a healed adipose fin scar are hatchery fish, all others are wild steelhead.

We understand there is an established and lengthy process used to develop seafood recommendations for listing, and we ask Seafood Watch to act as quickly as possible in order to save wild steelhead from restaurants and fish markets. Enclosed is a publication that contains information on wild steelhead populations that may be helpful. If you have questions or need detailed information, please contact us immediately and we will work together to save wild steelhead from extinction.

Sincerely,

Wild Steelhead Coalition  
Rich Simms  
President