



WILD SALMON CENTER

2019 Annual Report: Wild Resilience



We went to the river. Undistracted by social media, news reports, and the stresses of the city, we tied flies, fished for trout, read books, and played guitar. We are extremely blessed to have a refuge, a river that will take care of us.

The rivers that run through our lives anchor us and connect us to nature in a way that is as fundamental to our existence as anything else in this world. The river is where you can find, as Robert Traver wrote, “solitude without loneliness.” So many people don’t have that refuge, or find their favorite one endangered.

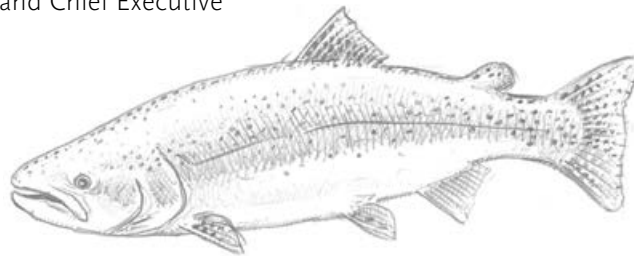
Our work at Wild Salmon Center is to ensure that a network of these rivers—the greatest remaining around the North Pacific—are protected forever. Protected for those who live on these rivers; for those who depend on the salmon, clean water, and other gifts the river brings; and for all those who seek refuge there in troubled times. Everyone needs these places.

And we won't have them unless we are ready to fight for their protection.

Thank you for helping us protect those places on Earth that are important for our health and sanity.

Thank you, as well, for your notes of encouragement and support these last few months. We are grateful for the wider Wild Salmon Center family, one that shares our mission and our life’s work. Together, we will emerge from this, alongside the rivers that keep us whole.

Guido Rahr
President and Chief Executive



A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Saving Refuges

Our world seems more unstable than ever. As our political arenas, our communities, the Covid-19 disease, and the economy are in constant flux, it feels as if the ground keeps shifting underneath our feet. It becomes harder to know where we are.

For my family, our connection to the river and its fish has given us sanctuary from a sometimes uncertain and chaotic world. In the 1950s, my grandfather, recovering from a painful divorce, retreated to our cabin on the Deschutes to lick his wounds. Years later, my mother, exhausted from raising five children, would grab her paints and easel and slip off to the river for refuge. My father, cooped up in an office for months, would grab his alpenstock walking stick, and like a coiled spring, head for the rimrock.

I was allowed to roam the rivers and hills alone, first in search of reptiles and later as a fly fisherman. No matter what was happening in my life, I knew that once I saw the dark waters surging through the basalt canyon, smelled the pungent tang of sagebrush, and felt the warm sun on my face, I would feel safe from the world.

When the Oregon governor ordered us to “shelter in place,” my wife Lee and I knew just what to do with our three boys.

Deschutes River, OREGON



Check out our video “A Salmon Life,” where WSC CEO Guido Rahr talks about a life built around salmon, rivers, and the fight to protect the North Pacific’s keystone species. See other video links throughout this report, available at salmonc.org/videos.





Russia
Expansion for Tugur Reserve, and responsible fishing practices pay back



British Columbia
A new gene bank for wild salmon



Russia and Alaska
Boomerang and a pilot program in Cordova set up next-generation success



Together, protecting the rivers we call home
Wild Salmon Center and more than a dozen close partners are securing
a future for salmon across the North Pacific.



Alaska
Bristol Bay coalition prepares for Pebble Mine's next stage



Washington
Stopping a dam on the Chehalis and conserving spring Chinook



Oregon
The multiplier effect of coast coho restoration, and a historic timber pact

Restoring Wild Salmon's Superpower

The long history of wild Pacific salmon reads like a heroic tale of resilience and resettlement. Salmon fought their way back to the coastal rivers of British Columbia and Alaska, after the retreat of the miles-thick Cordilleran ice sheet. Ten millennia later, in 1981, wild fish ran up Washington's Toutle River to successfully spawn, just a year after that watershed was reamed by debris and mud avalanches from Mt. St. Helens' dramatic eruption. You could say adaptability—driven by 18 million years of natural selection along the wild Pacific coast—is salmon's superpower.

But just as a new wave of climatic upheaval arrives, salmon's renowned adaptability has taken a beating. Over the last century, in pursuit of predictable, abundant fishing harvests, we've crowded out wild fish with hatchery cousins and overfished wild runs. These practices have reduced wild salmon genetic diversity on both sides of the Pacific, leading to a loss of survival strategies such as spawning runs once spread across the whole year.

It's like narrowing our trips to the grocery store to the same hour each week—when the shelves might be half-empty and the competition fierce.

That's putting whole populations at risk.

The good news is that through a combination of genetic studies, historic run reconstruction, and a deeper understanding of intact, diverse populations, we're getting a clear picture of how to restore and protect diversity. Only with a full range of ocean life cycles, run timings, and other survival strategies—life histories, as they're known—will wild salmon be well-equipped to survive and thrive as the climate changes faster than at any time in known history.

In the following pages, you'll see how we're working to understand, expand, and protect salmon's adaptive capacity across the North Pacific. Protecting that resilience is a core strategy in protecting salmon strongholds, and a must-have if we want the salmon story to continue through these uncertain times. Sometimes your heroes need a little help recovering their superpowers.



Jason Ching



Tim Steinberg

Opposition to Pebble Mine continues to hold strong, including at Alaska's annual Salmonfest gathering in Ninilchik.

Lake Aleknagik, Bristol Bay, ALASKA



Jason Ching

Defend Bristol Bay Campaign Digs in for Next Round of Pebble Fight

Wild Salmon Center has been working for a decade to protect Bristol Bay from the Pebble Mine. This toxic mine, proposed in the headwaters of the Kvichak and Nushagak rivers, poses an existential threat to the productivity of the world's greatest salmon stronghold.

Lately, WSC and Alaskan partners have been fighting an uphill battle against both a mining company and a federal permitting agency that clearly have little regard for the wishes of Bristol Bay communities or this majestic salmon fishery.

Two years ago, the Canadian company behind Pebble proposed a "small" mine plan to prove environmental responsibility and pass permitting muster. In reality, this is the first phase of a larger and more destructive mine—a plan made clear in Pebble executives' recent private shareholder and industry discussions. The "small" mine won't make money, but the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began a fast-tracked, politically driven permitting process for the mine anyway. WSC and our allies, as well as independent and agency scientists, have continually called on the Army Corps to address the well-documented problems with the Pebble project. They have not.

Finally, with Covid-19 threatening isolated and ill-equipped Bristol Bay communities this spring, local leaders asked the Corps to pause the final stage of permitting. The Army Corps responded by moving up its timeline.

Nonetheless, the Defend Bristol Bay campaign, which WSC is co-leading with tribal and conservation groups, is committed to this fight. Together, we have built a formidable legal and scientific expert team to challenge the Army Corps' potential Pebble Mine permit approval in court. We're rallying powerful allies in Congress for stricter Army Corps oversight, including Oregon Representative Peter DeFazio, chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. And in Alaska, we continue to strengthen Pebble opposition, aided by media reports about Pebble secretly courting favors from Alaska's governor.

The goal is to defend Bristol Bay until the politics in Washington and Juneau change. Then, we can restart a science-based conversation about Bristol Bay, the perils of toxic mining in its headwaters, and the region's need for permanent protections. Until then, we're not backing down.



Jason Ching

The Gold Standard for Diversity

Bristol Bay is more reliable than any salmon fishery in the world in putting fish in boat holds and smokehouses while delivering nutrients back into ecosystems to support myriad species. Over the last six decades, the average return is over 30 million fish.

The secret of this success is in the diversity of Bristol Bay's hundreds of distinct salmon runs. Thick-bodied lake salmon and thinner creek spawners. Juveniles that rear for a year in aquamarine lakes, and some that take a full second year before heading downstream for the ocean. All the characteristics of fish and habitat form a matrix. Picture it a thousand by a thousand, with each square representing one run of fish. In any given life cycle full of perils like salmon sharks, predatory birds, and low zooplankton food levels, some of the fish runs will hit the survival jackpot and return to Bristol Bay. Some will not.

But with nearly all the survival options covered, there are almost always enough winners to sustain high levels of overall abundance. In fact, scientist Daniel Schindler found that without this rich habitat diversity and locally adapted salmon populations, Bristol Bay would see low enough returns to warrant fisheries closures every two or three years. The region hasn't seen a major closure since 2002.



Scott Carlson

WSC's Matt Sloat and Charles Saunders of the Nuxalk Nation collecting samples on the Dean River.

Jeremy Koreski

Banking on Salmon DNA in B.C.

On British Columbia's Central Coast, rivers like the Dean host unique races of wild steelhead coveted by anglers, while regional wild Chinook, sockeye, and chum salmon runs sustain ecosystems and local communities.

This is where Wild Salmon Center is partnering with Coastal Rivers Conservancy, First Nations, Simon Fraser University, and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to build a game-changing genetic library—one that can help both salmon and the communities they support.

Over the next few years, this library will house DNA samples from hundreds of genetically distinct Pacific Northwest wild salmon runs, including key stocks from the Skeena and the Dean. Central Coast samples were collected this past fall by a team including WSC, CRC, and the Nuxalk Nation, with more field research planned in the coming years.

This tool will help salmon managers and First Nations answer a critical question: what fish are caught in B.C.'s commercial fisheries? Because most of the province's salmon fisheries are "mixed stock"—in coastal marine zones where multiple runs mingle during their homeward migration—fishers can accidentally overharvest depressed or at-risk populations.

Ultimately, says WSC Science Director Matt Sloat, the library will help map each run's migration timing and route. Samples collected from these mixed-stock fisheries can be matched with the library to determine what populations are moving through a fishery, where, and when. This knowledge could then inform selective fishing guidelines in areas where salmon populations co-migrate, to allow vulnerable runs safe passage.

The DNA library reflects a new understanding of wild salmon's amazing ability to adapt to changing conditions. Even geographically close salmon populations can be genetically distinct, evolved for specific conditions. When fishers and salmon managers use the library to inform where and when to avoid vulnerable runs, fisheries can be fine-tuned to save that genetic diversity. The goal, a healthy "portfolio effect," can pay off the same way this strategy works in the financial world: by spreading risk across many categories.

"Managers have to balance conservation goals with important fisheries," says Dr. Sloat. "Knowing more about each stock in a salmon portfolio can help support better fisheries and also work to recover endangered salmon runs."



Alamy

What Glacier Melt Means for Salmon

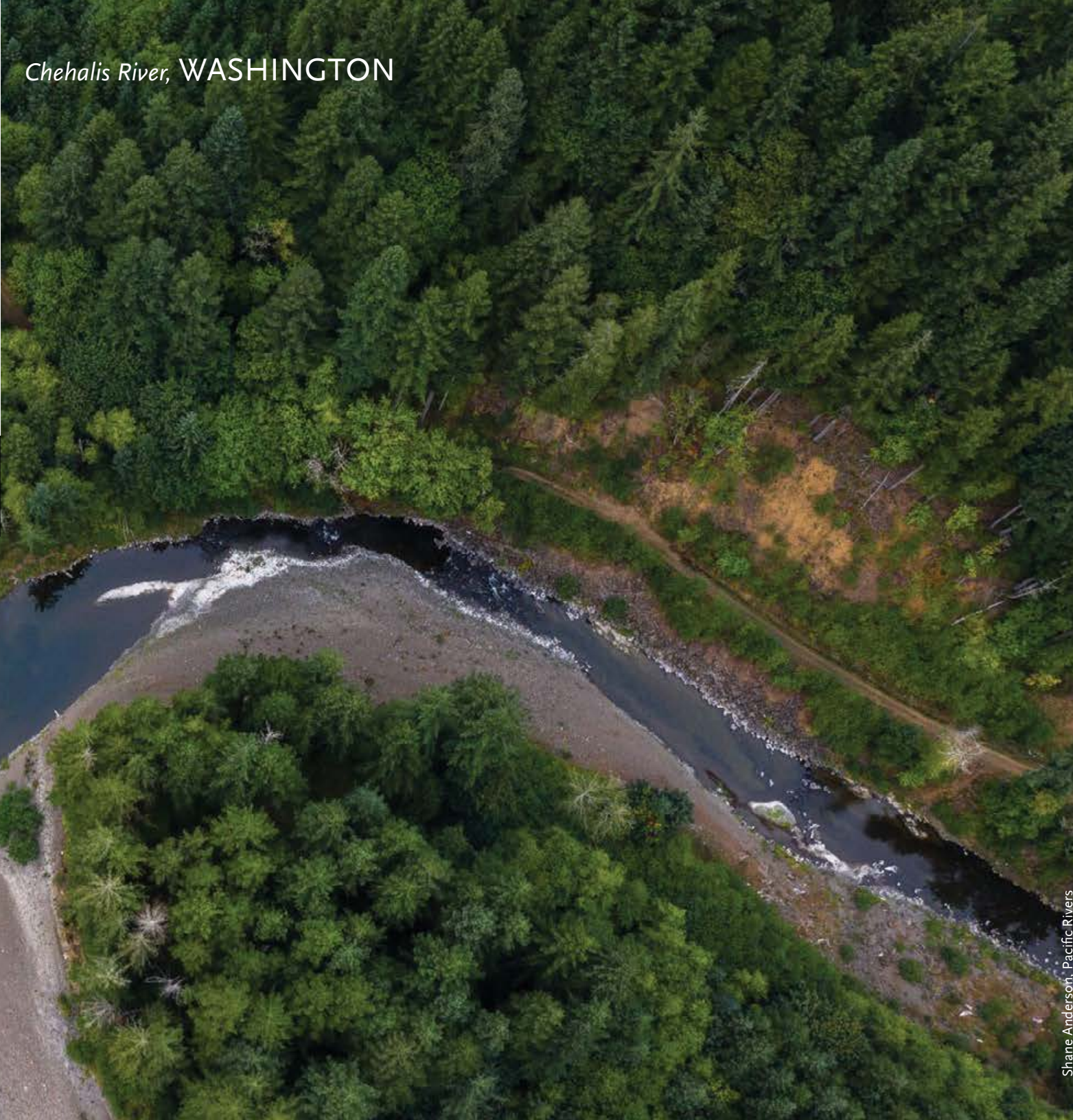
A new study from WSC Science Director Matt Sloat and a team of Pacific salmon experts finds that 85 percent of North America's salmon watersheds have at least some glacier coverage—and that 80 percent of that cover will be lost by 2100.

Disappearing glaciers, combined with other climate effects, will leave some North Pacific salmon systems more vulnerable to heat and drought. But retreating ice will also likely create thousands of miles of salmon habitat.

Salmon are hardy and adaptable, with a long history dating back to the Miocene, with its warmer temperatures and higher seas. Wild salmon's genetic diversity expresses itself in a range of behaviors, including the fraction of salmon that "stray"—e.g., seek out new spawning rivers instead of returning to where they were born.

Because glacier melt will open potential new habitat, salmon managers must think ahead, says study lead author Kara Pitman of British Columbia's Simon Fraser University.

"We recommend they consider the future state of salmon, how habitat might change," says Pitman. "That means integrating longer-term predictive modeling for glacier retreat."



Chehalis River, WASHINGTON

WSC's Jess Helsley and Dan Penn of the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation on the Chehalis River.

WSC Staff

Shane Anderson, Pacific Rivers

Protecting the Chehalis for Spring Chinook

Spring Chinook have a distinct climate advantage: they enter the rivers early in the year, before hot summer flows arrive, and swim to cool springfed pools high in watersheds to ride out the summer months.

But if springers need to climb high into a river system, then physical barriers like dams can have an outside impact on their success.

Now, we're facing a new dam on the upper Chehalis River, smack-dab in prime spring Chinook spawning and rearing habitat. The dam has been proposed to residents of Lewis, Thurston, and Grays Harbor county as a way to mitigate costly flooding. But the dam, with a starting price tag of \$628 million, won't stop flooding, only reduce it modestly. That huge budget would be better spent on real solutions: reconnecting floodplains, replacing broken road culverts, and elevating at-risk structures, while protecting critical Chinook habitat.

The Chehalis remains one of Washington's best steelhead fisheries and an important source of wild Chinook, especially for the Chehalis and Quinault people. Yet spring Chinook runs have been so low that the fishery has been closed for five years straight. Meanwhile, new research from a team including WSC Science Director Matt Sloat shows that because spring Chinook are genetically distinct from fall Chinook, their early return is likely hard-wired. That means once these runs are lost, strays from fall Chinook populations are not likely to replace them. Bottom line: the risk from the dam comes at exactly the wrong time for Chehalis spring Chinook.

"We know that springers in the Chehalis have been on the decline, and it's even worse than we thought," says Dr. Sloat. "This is not a hypothetical."

As part of the Chehalis River Alliance, WSC has developed extensive scientific arguments against the dam and is supporting alliance communications during state and federal dam reviews.

We're urging the state to pursue a smarter vision for the Chehalis: one that, like Chinook salmon, is adaptive across the whole watershed. A suite of flood control and habitat restoration strategies fits the challenges of the 21st century. What doesn't is this dam: one big, costly, concrete fix, and a poor one at that.



Alamy

See how we're opening up cold water refuges for salmon and steelhead on the Olympic Peninsula: salmonc.org/videos.



Cold Water Connection Gains Velocity

On the Olympic Peninsula, projections show salmon rivers could stay relatively cool even in the face of climate change. But access to cold water is crucial for wild salmon. Yet 4,000 known barriers—from culverts and other “mini-dams” to old roads—block fish from freely using these cold streams. And as a result of overdue maintenance and scant infrastructure spending, these barriers are degrading fast.

The Cold Water Connection Campaign, a joint partnership with Wild Salmon Center, Coast Salmon Partnership, and Trout Unlimited, is two years into an ambitious plan to map these barriers and identify exactly where better fish passage will pay off the most on rivers like the Hoh and Quillayute. The ultimate goal is to open some 150 miles of critical cold water habitat.

Prioritizing the right projects means trudging county roads, working with private landowners, and getting local, state, tribal, and federal agencies to share data. Thanks to substantial recent investments by Wallace Research Foundation and Open Rivers Fund, that work has accelerated—well-positioning our campaign for upcoming funding opportunities.



Maggie Peyton of the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council and WSC's Mark Trenholm on the Nehalem River.

Learn how restoration is key to protecting Oregon and California strongholds at salmonc.org/videos.



Freshwaters Illustrated

Alamy

Recovering Coastal Rivers and Jobs

Young Oregon Coast coho take their time in freshwater, exploring pools and side channels for a year or more before their big ocean exodus.

That extended freshwater residency is why efforts to restore coho habitat pay off for other salmonids. In the upper Rogue River, work to expand cold water reaches for coho is a boon for basin steelhead. In the Nehalem, efforts to bring back beavers and their ponds restore ecological processes good for both coho and rearing fall Chinook. And reconnecting tidal wetlands in the Siletz, Coos Bay, and Siuslaw watersheds helps all salmon species living here.

Recovering threatened Oregon Coast coho is the goal of the Coast Coho Partnership, which Wild Salmon Center helped establish in 2015. In the process, this work is restoring some of the most productive salmon watersheds south of Canada. Working with local teams, WSC drafts science-based action plans for these watersheds, identifying high-priority coho habitat restoration projects that WSC then works to fund. Since 2017, the partnership has driven more than \$10 million into local restoration efforts, thanks in large part to support from the NOAA Restoration Center, Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

This work also has economic benefits for local communities. On the Rogue's West Evans Creek, a WSC grant to the Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council is funding a large wood installation that will employ some two dozen people, from log fellers to archaeologists.

But recovering coho will take more than habitat restoration. That's why the partnership knits tightly with WSC's Oregon policy work. In the Coos Bay headwaters, we helped keep the 82,000-acre Elliott State Forest in public ownership; WSC's Bob Van Dyk is helping to develop a conservation plan for the Elliott with other stakeholders. On the Nehalem, we've complemented restoration work with a state scenic waterway designation. And in the Rogue River basin, we've also secured new stream protections on private forestland (see p. 17).

"Oregon Coast coho is well-positioned for a comeback," says WSC Coast Program Director Mark Trenholm. "Local communities get it: they want to fish for coho again, and know that we can get there through strategic restoration and better stewardship of working lands."



Alamy

Restoring Flows, Spring Chinook to Rogue

The Rogue River's spring Chinook run is one of the most important left in the Pacific Northwest. Spring Chinook have a special tool for warming climates: they climb rivers early to wait out hot summers in cool upper stretches. But on the Rogue, one dam's water management system is impacting springers' natural advantage.

The 327-foot Lost Creek Dam controls river temperatures by releasing reservoir water; in theory, this helps wild fish by acting as a seasonal HVAC system. The Rogue's fall Chinook now use this higher and cooler late-summer water to spawn earlier and farther upriver. The problem? They're now reaching spring Chinook habitat, interbreeding, and diluting springers' unique genetics.

That genetic shift is important. Research from WSC and UC Davis shows that spring Chinook are wired for early return. To protect springer genetics—and their natural advantage—WSC Science Director Matt Sloat says the Rogue needs creative water solutions.

"Returning to natural water flows and temperatures would restore the benefits of being a spring Chinook," says Dr. Sloat. "We're combining genetic studies and advanced flow modeling to help policymakers better understand how to secure a strong future for wild Rogue springers."

David Herasimtschuk

Governor Kate Brown and WSC's Bob Van Dyk (below, right) following signing of Oregon timber agreement.

Learn why Oregon needs to modernize timber practices: salmonc.org/videos.



WSC Staff

Sea Change for Oregon Forestry?

For two decades, Wild Salmon Center labored against powerful Oregon timber interests to modernize salmon habitat protections for state and private forests on the coast. These forests, which span millions of acres, harbor some of the greatest remaining wild salmon and steelhead runs in the Lower 48—in rivers like the Nehalem, the Rogue, and the Umpqua.

In recent years, WSC worked with the media and new champions on the state board of forestry to spotlight Oregon’s weak forestry practices. Then last year, frustrated by the slow pace of change, WSC and a raft of other conservation, fishing, and citizen groups filed a series of ballot measures to overhaul forest policy.

Finally, the political ground shifted.

In January and February, WSC helped negotiate a historic forestry reform agreement between a dozen conservation organizations and an equal number of timber companies.

The parties agreed to expanded forested stream buffers in the Rogue-Siskiyou region of Southwest Oregon, and to new pesticide spray notifications and spray buffers around streams, residences, and schools across Oregon. And we agreed to begin a process for creating comprehensive rules to protect salmon habitat on over 10 million acres of private timberland in Oregon, with the goal of completing a federally recognized Habitat Conservation Plan.

A similar Habitat Conservation Plan in Washington state led to better protections on 60,000 stream miles. Oregon could see improvement across 50,000 stream miles, a crucial survival tool for salmon in the face of climate change.

In a show of good faith, conservation and citizen groups rescinded the forestry ballot measures, and timber groups dropped their three counter measures. And in June, timber companies agreed to adopt temporary stream buffer expansions in the Rogue-Siskiyou region, while the parties awaited legislative action.

It will take 18 months to complete a habitat conservation plan, and then a federal process for final approval. But combined with in-progress habitat conservation plans for the Elliott and Tillamook state forests, we are close to a generational win for wild salmon and clean water in some of the best salmon strongholds in the Lower 48.



Justin Bailie

Find out why fishermen from far and near love the Nehalem—the gem of the Oregon Coast—at salmonc.org/videos.



The Scenic Nehalem

The Nehalem River is one of six world-class salmon and steelhead rivers that flow out of the 500,000-acre Tillamook and Clatsop state forests. It’s also a hot spot of fish diversity with six species of wild fish, including rare summer Chinook, strong coho runs, Oregon’s largest wild winter steelhead, and some of the last chum salmon south of Canada.

Now, a 17-mile stretch of the Nehalem is officially a state scenic waterway, following the hard work of Wild Salmon Center and our partners, along with Governor Kate Brown's signature last year. Scenic waterway status means that the lower stretch of the Nehalem will remain free of dams, and its natural water flows will be protected for fish and wildlife. Additionally, landowners will work with state parks officials to minimize development impacts within a quarter-mile buffer on either side of the designated river run. (Wild Salmon Center worked successfully last year to stop a clearcut scheduled for 67 acres of state forest along this stretch of river).

“This designation helps secure one of the most beautiful sections of the Nehalem and some of the most famous winter steelhead riffles and pools in the Pacific Northwest,” says WSC CEO Guido Rahr.



Alexander Abramov and WSC's Mariusz Wroblewski on the Tugur River.

Tugur River, RUSSIA



Tugur Nears Source-to-Sea Protection

This winter, the governor of Khabarovsk announced that his administration would begin the creation of a new one-million-acre nature reserve stretching across the middle and upper section of the Tugur River. That reserve would mark the final piece of the conservation puzzle in a decade-long drive to protect the world's greatest stronghold for Siberian taimen: salmon's long-lived, oversized, ancient cousin.

The Tugur is gaining increasing notoriety worldwide, after fly fishermen caught and released a world record 108-pound taimen this winter—a mark of the watershed's unmatched productivity. Unfortunately, its virgin larch, Korean pine, and spruce forests are highly sought by Chinese-backed logging ventures in the region.

But thanks to a partnership between Wild Salmon Center and Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation, and to the work of local sportfish lodge owner Alexander Abramov, conservation measures long in the works are now falling into place. In 2014, Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation, led by Alexander Kulikov, secured a 197,000-acre protected area across a key section of the lower river. Joint river patrols by Abramov and local government inspectors have brought illegal poaching and mining activity under control. Poaching had reduced chum salmon populations to dangerous levels, affecting the taimen, which feed on adult chum, as well as grayling and lenok, as soon as they are big enough to swallow the prey fish whole. Those marine nutrients fuel taimen's record growth on the Tugur.

Within two years, the vastly expanded reserve, to be named after Russian explorer George Middendorf, will secure the river's midsection and several headwater streams. It will give taimen and salmon a protected corridor from spawning grounds virtually to the sea. Logging will be prohibited. And new protections will give further refuge to more than 20 species of fish as well as brown bears, reindeer, osprey, Manchurian elk, Steller's sea lions, and Steller's sea eagles.

"Once this reserve is in place, the Tugur will be a salmon conservation success," says WSC CEO Guido Rahr. "True to the stronghold strategy, we've helped our partners head off destruction. The future looks hopeful for the Tugur, the most vibrant ecosystem left in the Russian Far East."



Catch and Release Advances in Russia

Will catch-and-release fishing become an accepted practice in Russia? We're going to find out. Right now, fly anglers are a rare breed among Russian fishermen and women—maybe one or two thousand in a country of 145 million. But at the urging of our partners at the Russian Salmon Association, last year the Russian parliament recognized catch-and-release as an official recreational fishing category.

Now, RSA leaders are launching a new campaign to explain the benefits—and the sheer joy—of catching wild fish on a fly. They have ambitious plans for blitzing airwaves and hosting promotional events. WSC is partnering with RSA's campaign on multiple fronts: helping to produce educational films and brochures, and enlisting experts like Dr. Mikhail Skopets (above) to develop federal guidelines and new science. The goal is to take pressure off taimen and other long-lived wild fish species, as well as build a stronger conservation ethic among Russia's legions of fishermen and women.

"Our sport fishing members have been practicing catch-and-release for a long time," says Gennady Zharkov, RSA advisory board chairman. "They have a huge practical knowledge that it does protect fish populations."

Kamchatka Peninsula, RUSSIA



Dmitry Lisitsyn of Sakhalin Environment Watch on a Dagi River poaching raid.



The Wild Advantage

For more than a decade and a half, Wild Salmon Center's sustainable fisheries team worked with Russian fishermen in Kamchatka and Sakhalin Island to protect their wild salmon fisheries and raise the value of that catch in the marketplace. Wild salmon stocks, we believed, would be more resilient than hatchery-raised salmon and deliver better long-term value to fishing communities, along with wild ecosystems.

Today, building on years of cooperation with WSC, fishermen in West Kamchatka and Northeast Sakhalin are systematically handling threats to wild salmon fisheries and demonstrating the market value of those fish.

In West Kamchatka, four companies worked with Ocean Outcomes (a spin-off of WSC) and later, U.S.-based 4SeasSolutions, to certify eight regional fisheries through the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC). This international certification requires that companies have an established plan to combat caviar poaching in each watershed and a science-based plan to allow enough salmon to return to each watershed before fishing starts. West Kamchatka also remains mostly hatchery-free, and its rivers remain wholly intact, allowing it to continue as the second most productive salmon region on Earth.

In the last five years, West Kamchatka's salmon fisheries harvests have consistently led the rest of the Russian Far East, with a whopping 378,000 tons in 2019. Kamchatka-based companies earn extra returns on those fish in international markets, because of the MSC label.

On Sakhalin Island, 20 fishing companies have joined with our longtime conservation partner Sakhalin Environment Watch, to form the Wild Salmon Territory, which encompasses 25 river systems on the northeast coast of the island. Each river is covered by anti-poaching controls and a salmon population health assessment developed with Russian Academy of Sciences. This region has also remained hatchery-free, and SEW is expanding protected areas, with proposals for the Nabil and Dagi watersheds.

Over the last three seasons, Wild Salmon Territory pink and chum fisheries produced stronger runs than other regions, like the hatchery-dominated Aniva Bay, which was once the breadbasket of the Sakhalin salmon economy.

"Along with Alaska's Bristol Bay sockeye fishery, these two Russian regions are strong proof to the world of the benefits of wild-only salmon fisheries," says Mariusz Wroblewski, WSC's Western Pacific Director.



Pound Nets Hold Promise

In salmon fisheries across the North Pacific, the race is on for a way to fish both successfully and selectively.

In open water and in river mouths, fish runs intermingle. That means commercial fishermen accidentally catch protected species alongside the abundant wild and hatchery runs they want.

One novel pilot project goes back in time for a forward-looking solution. Pound nets, once ubiquitous on the West Coast, were banned nearly a century ago in Washington and Oregon as too successful. Now, one is back on the Lower Columbia River, managed by the Wild Fish Conservancy and supported by partners including Wild Salmon Center. The net works passively, leading fish into a watery "heart" where each can be identified by sight and then either netted or released, completely untouched.

With the Columbia pound net reporting near-zero mortality for protected species like wild steelhead and Chinook, project partners are now considering the potential for pound nets in other salmon systems, like B.C.'s Dean Channel and the Skeena. The pound net's comeback adds a promising new "old" tool in the campaign to protect wild salmon.



Boomerang's Next-Gen Success

The rivers of Russia's Sakhalin Island, just north of Japan, nourish an amazing 11 salmonid species, from rare sea-run taimen to the prolific pinks that support its fisheries.

So it makes sense that salmon figure, big time, in the educational programming of Boomerang Club, a 25-year-old nonprofit serving Sakhalin's outdoor adventurers. Since 2001, Boomerang's classes and outdoor camps have reached about every schoolchild in Sakhalin. Key to Boomerang's success is an ability to translate a passion for conservation to young audiences—through video games, board games, adventure excursions, and contests. That the message is getting through is evidenced by the generations of former students who are now returning, in young adulthood, to become the club's organizers and guides.

Now, with the help of Wild Salmon Center, a Boomerang partner since 2009, the club's popular program is expanding across the Russian Far East. School systems in regions from Khabarovsk to Primorye and Buryatia are picking up its field-tested curricula. Boomerang's training webinars attract hundreds of viewers, some from as far as Belarus and Mongolia. In Kamchatka, Boomerang recently coached 30 local educators on wild salmon life cycles. This past summer, with the staff of Kronotsky Federal Reserve in Kamchatka, the club held a national curriculum-development competition about wild salmon; teachers across Russia can now freely download the winning lesson plans.

Boomerang's new reach is accelerating the education of future salmon advocates. And like the virtuous cycle of its now-grown Sakhalin students—returning to teach and guide—students across the Russian Far East will hopefully help spread the gospel of salmon.



WSC Staff

Alaska Education Program Progresses

In Cordova, Alaska, practically everyone is connected to the annual salmon season. No surprise then that an educational pilot program here—co-developed by Wild Salmon Center, Prince William Sound Science Center, and the Copper River Watershed Project—uses salmon to teach school kids math, science, and research skills.

Each fall and spring since 2016, fifth graders (top) at Mt. Eccles Elementary wade into spawning streams, play Salmonopoly, “become” a watershed, and—a key element of this pioneering curriculum—trace salmon to the human families they support.

Now, WSC and its partners are taking the Cordova program to the next level. The next goal is to standardize it, and offer these field-tested lesson plans to coastal teachers throughout Alaska.

Photos (from left to right): Field classroom; Field trips range from near-by streams to the remote Shantar Islands off the coast of Khabarovsk where students document wildlife; Boomerang Club chair Valentina Mezentseva proudly shows off a new, WSC-supported educational initiative called “Young Friends of the Ocean,” which packages all of Boomerang's priority themes into one formal program.





The Stronghold Fund Steps Up

Through The Stronghold Fund (TSF), Wild Salmon Center leverages major financial contributions to support partner organizations and high-leverage initiatives throughout the North Pacific. The Fund was created with the belief that we're most successful when we form strategic alliances to achieve shared conservation goals. Two critical needs of those alliances are targeted, rapid response funding for time-sensitive campaigns, and stable resources for the network of leading organizations and coalitions protecting the North Pacific's last, great salmon strongholds.

Since its creation in 2015, WSC has been working to capitalize The Stronghold Fund at \$15 million. To date, we've raised \$10 million toward that goal. And for several years the Fund has deployed annual grants to support efforts in the Skeena and Dean regions in British Columbia. (See story p. 10 on TSF-funded work in the Central Coast of B.C.)

Along with new grants for British Columbia, this year the Fund is providing resources to advance a major opportunity in Oregon. (See

timber agreements, p. 16.) Given the challenges associated with Covid-19 and its far-reaching economic impacts, we also stand ready to back our constellation of partners in Pacific stronghold rivers and regions. We plan to increase grant-making over the next 6 to 12 months to bolster targeted conservation efforts.

As we accelerate grant-making now and in the coming years, we continue to look for new funders to invest in The Stronghold Fund and help us fully deliver on our high-impact strategy to protect the Pacific's most extraordinary salmon, steelhead, and trout rivers. Now, more than ever, we have a singular role to help ensure the strength and capacity of our partners and to support vitally important initiatives that benefit the North Pacific's wild salmon and steelhead and all that is linked to them.

To learn more about The Stronghold Fund, contact Executive Director David Finkel (dfinkel@wildsalmoncenter.org) or visit thestrongholdfund.org.

The Stronghold Fund has provided multi-year support for WSC's partnership efforts with SkeenaWild to conserve the Skeena River and neighboring watersheds (Carrie Collingwood of the Babine River Foundation pictured below left). The Fund also supports Coastal Rivers Conservancy's work in the Dean and Central Coast region of British Columbia (right).

Learn more about investing in extraordinary wild salmon and steelhead rivers at thestrongholdfund.org.



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Introducing Wild Salmon Center's New Ambassador Council!

Fishing guides, outfitters, and lodge owners constitute some of the most passionate advocates for wild fish across the North Pacific.

In 2019, Wild Salmon Center resolved to harness the power of these conservation allies by forming its new Ambassador Council—leaders in the fishing industry who care deeply about the health of wild salmon and steelhead strongholds.

This small but mighty group of industry experts are in a unique position to help further WSC's mission by showcasing our conservation work with clients, elevating urgent conservation campaigns, and sharing what they see and hear in their home waters. Together, we're building a stronger network of those who enjoy spending time in these watersheds and want to do more to protect them over the long term.

Our first three Ambassadors represent some of WSC's longest-standing conservation partners, dedicated to the stewardship of key wild fish strongholds:

Kate Crump grew up in Virginia but found her calling as a salmon fisherman in the wilderness of Washington. Kate and her husband Justin co-own Fregate Travel, which specializes in all-inclusive guided experiences in Bristol Bay, Alaska, and coastal Oregon. She also serves as an ambassador for Patagonia, Fishpond, and other leading brands, and is a staunch advocate for protecting Bristol Bay from the Pebble Mine and reforming harmful logging practices in coastal Oregon.

Ken Morrish has worked in the fly fishing industry for over 30 years. In 1999 he launched Fly Water Travel, a fly fishing travel company specializing



Kate Crump, Ken Morrish, and Jeff Hickman.

in top international angling destinations. Ken is also an accomplished writer and photographer whose work has appeared in Patagonia's catalog, Outside, Fly Fisherman, and other popular publications. He is a dedicated environmentalist particularly focused on the cold water fisheries of the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and British Columbia.

Jeff Hickman taught himself to fly fish at a young age and went on to work in fly shops, guide in Oregon and Alaska, and even manage a bonefishing lodge in the Bahamas. Jeff has been guiding since 2002 and now owns and operates Fish The Swing, a guide and outfitter service specializing in steelhead fishing on the Deschutes, Clackamas, and coastal rivers in Oregon, as well as the Dean River in British Columbia. Jeff is a passionate conservationist with a unique knowledge of wild fish, their ecosystems, and the challenges they face.

Stay tuned throughout the year as WSC continues to build our Ambassador Council program and announces opportunities to engage with its members. And please consider finding WSC Ambassadors online to book your next fly fishing adventure!



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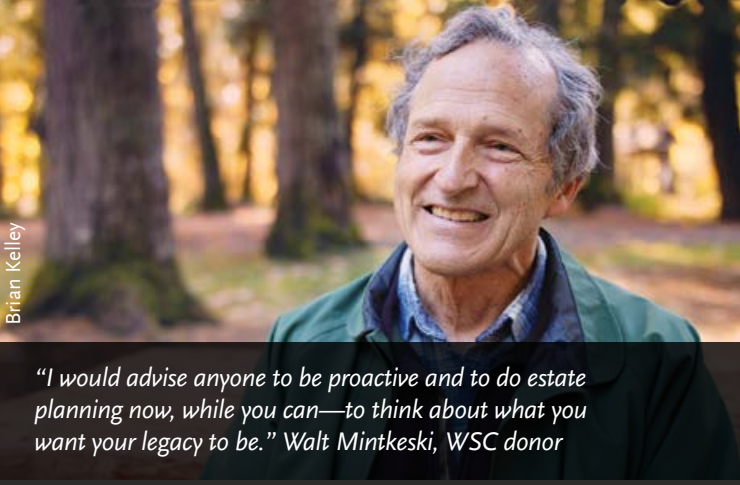
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Front from left to right: Olympic Peninsula field tour with Mara Zimmerman (Coast Salmon Partnership), Lauren MacFarland (Quinault Indian Nation Division of Natural Resources/ QIN), Andrea Keller-Helsel (Hewlett Foundation), Nicole Cordan (Pew Charitable Trust), Amee Pacheco (WSC), Anji Moraes (Vulcan), Julie Turrini (Resources Legacy Fund), Gary LaLonde and Freddie Cole (QIN); back row Ryan Miller (QIN), Jess Helsley (WSC), Steven Malloch (Resources Legacy Fund), Franklin Pope, Jr. (QIN).



WSC Staff



Brian Kelley

“I would advise anyone to be proactive and to do estate planning now, while you can—to think about what you want your legacy to be.” Walt Mintkeski, WSC donor

PLANNED GIVING:
A powerful commitment to wild
salmon strongholds

If history has taught us anything, it's that while our most extraordinary rivers are still strongholds for wild fish today, their well-being is by no means assured. Protecting our best wild salmon watersheds will take a long-term, multigenerational commitment.

Making a bequest to Wild Salmon Center is a powerful way to remember the beautiful rivers and landscapes that mean the most to you—the ones you want to see thrive today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

Right now, WSC has a remarkable opportunity to do more with your planned gift: an anonymous donor has offered to match all new bequests to WSC, doubling your impact for wild fish.

There are many ways to start building your stronghold legacy. We welcome the opportunity to work with you (or your advisors) to create a plan that fits your needs and supports our work to ensure these globally-important ecosystems continue to benefit our children and grandchildren.

To learn more, or to tell us about your existing plans, contact Kim Kosa at kkosa@wildsalmoncenter.org or (971) 255-5562, or visit wildsalmoncenter.org/legacy.

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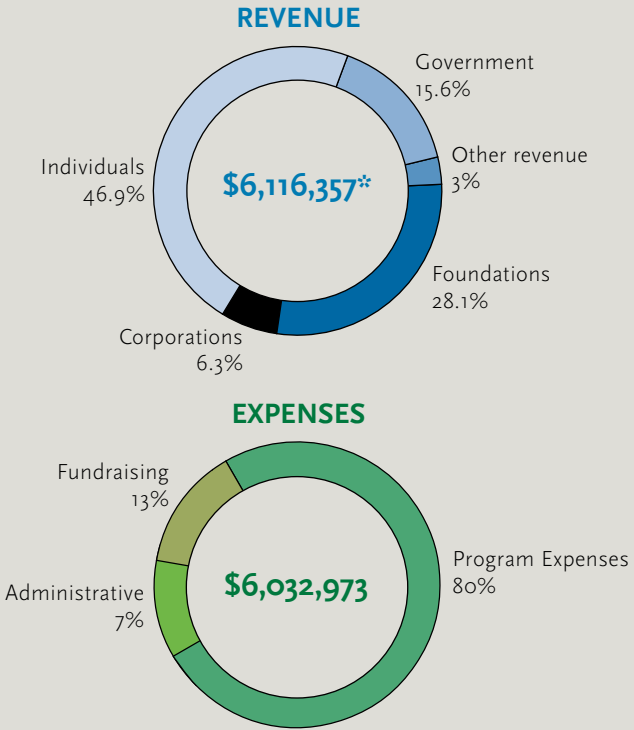
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Greg Knox (SkeenaWild), Lindsay Eberts, Mariusz Wroblewski (WSC), Aaron Hill (Watershed Watch Salmon
Society), Ivan Thompson (WSC Board), Scott Carlson (Coastal Rivers Conservancy) at 2019 WSC event.



FINANCIALS: Statement of Activities
For the fiscal year ending December 31, 2019



*Revenue includes new funds raised during each calendar year, contributions pledged for work in future years.



Wild Salmon Center has received consistently high ratings for sound fiscal management from **Charity Navigator**.



Wild Salmon Center has been awarded the “**Best in America**” Seal of Excellence by the Independent Charities of America and Local Independent Charities of America. This signifies that, upon rigorous independent review, the organization met the highest standards of public accountability, as well as program and cost effectiveness.



WSC is a grantee of **The Conservation Alliance**, a group of outdoor industry companies that disburses collective annual membership dues to grassroots environmental organizations.

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Consultants
Dr. Mikhail Skopets, Science Fellow

*Front cover: Schooling pink salmon in British Columbia (April Bencze).
Back cover: Great Bear Rain Forest bear cubs (Ian McAllister).*



Our Sensational Staff (Selfies)

These are extraordinary times, and as such, our annual staff photo has become our selfie mosaic. From the homes and home rivers of our staff to yours, be safe and well.

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Featured Board Members

Tom Hansen Entertainment lawyer, Los Angeles
Board member since: 2018
Why WSC? “I grew up fishing the ocean, the surf, and local lakes and rivers in L.A., as well as the Sierras. On the Tugur River in Russia a few years ago, Guido brought to my attention the tremendous work WSC was doing to protect wild salmon, the life blood of the enormous North Pacific. That really inspired me.”

Loretta Keller Chef/Restaurateur, San Francisco
Board member since: 2017
What draws you to salmon? “I come from British Columbia, so I was raised on salmon and had the scent of cedar, fir, and moss in my nose from birth. One of my favorite rivers now is the Sapsuk, aka Hoodoo River in Alaska, on the Aleutian Peninsula, for its remoteness, the chance to encounter all five species of Pacific salmon blasting in from the Bering Sea, major wildlife, as well as volcanos and a fabulous night sky.”

Nate Mantua Research scientist, Santa Cruz
Board member since: 2019
Why WSC? “I love the fact that WSC targets strongholds all around the Pacific Rim, and that they partner with and empower local groups for effective and lasting conservation actions. I also love the way they put salmon-oriented science into action.”
Favorite places to fish: “Anywhere in Steelhead Country, from northern British Columbia to California’s Big Sur coast.”

From left to right: Mitch Zuklie, Loretta Keller, and Todd True; Nate Mantua, Sara LaBorde, and Matt Sloat; Audie Paulus, Rick Halford, and Emily Anderson; Deke Welles, Mark Johnstad, Daniel Plummer. Photos by Robert Wade.





WILD SALMON CENTER

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(503) 222-1804

wildsalmoncenter.org

