

Why wild salmon?

By protecting wild salmon and their habitat, we preserve the health of rivers, forests, the wellbeing of communities, and the economies of Pacific Rim countries. Wild salmon are a keystone species, occupying a unique ecological niche—supporting and uniting North Pacific countries from the United States and Canada to Russia and Japan. Numerous animal species, from macro-invertebrates to brown bears, and vegetation, ranging from trees to grasses, depend on the marine-derived nutrients that salmon provide.

In turn, the forests, wetlands, and rivers inhabited by salmon provide many natural benefits, including fresh drinking water, flood control, and carbon sinks. These benefits are increasingly important in light of human population growth and climate change.

From an economic perspective, Pacific salmon generate more than \$3 billion in income each year and provide communities throughout the North Pacific with tens of thousands of jobs. In the coastal communities of Kamchatka (Russia), Alaska (USA), British Columbia (Canada), salmon are often the primary source of subsistence.



Kamchatka: the world's salmon stronghold Protecting the wealth of the North Pacific's salmon rivers



Why are wild salmon at risk?

Land conversion and water use for agricultural purposes, oil and gas development, mining, and pollution have severely degraded salmon watersheds over the last hundred years. In the more impacted areas, the construction of hydroelectric dams, overharvest, and the regular release of hatchery salmon have reduced wild salmon populations to just a fraction of their historic numbers.

On Kamchatka, the birthplace of one quarter of Pacific salmon, rivers still flow freely from headwaters to ocean and salmon migrate in large numbers unimpeded. Yet even here, salmon face growing threats. Poaching is an epidemic with an estimated 55,000 tons of illegal wild salmon harvested a year (40-80% more than the reported legal catch in Kamchatka). Russia also plans to

expand mining for gold and platinum, putting healthy salmon stocks at risk. Oil and gas development could threaten natural ecosystems due to the impacts of drilling, potential oil spills, and the construction of onshore infrastructure.

What can we do?

In a number of countries, including the US, salmon conservation efforts in the past have focused on the recovery of degraded watersheds and threatened species. Once salmon habitat is destroyed, it is costly, or even impossible, to restore. And once salmon numbers fall below a sustainable level, the chance of successfully recovering their populations diminishes greatly.

The odds that salmon will survive into the long-term depend on our ability to protect the North Pacific's

healthiest watersheds, centers of abundance and genetic diversity. These extraordinary places are called "salmon strongholds." Only by protecting our healthiest systems and most robust salmon populations can we achieve the greatest conservation results. Kamchatka is one of the world's last wild salmon strongholds.

Wild Salmon Center's mission is to protect these last, best salmon rivers while they are still healthy and strong. Today, we have a chance to pass on to our descendants our remaining salmon strongholds. In order to do this, collaborative, science-based efforts need to be carried out in all four North Pacific countries.





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Progress in conserving salmon strongholds:

In Russia, on the Kamchatka Peninsula, the world's first salmon refuge was created in the Kol River basin, protecting one of the most productive salmon ecosystems on Earth.

In Japan, Oji Paper, the country's largest paper company, set aside private lands to protect the Sarufutsu River in Hokkaido, one of the last free-flowing rivers in the country and home to the critically endangered sea-run taimen.

In Canada, the Harrison River was identified as the first Canadian salmon stronghold under the North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership, a broad public-private initiative that is

proactively conserving the healthiest and most productive salmon rivers.

In the United States, federal legislation aimed at protecting the best remaining salmon populations and their habitat was introduced in 2009. If passed, the Pacific Salmon Stronghold Conservation Act would complement past efforts to recover endangered salmon populations.

These small steps are the beginning of salmon stronghold protection in individual countries. If we combine our efforts, we will be able to form an international network of strongholds throughout the entire range of Pacific salmon.

The decisions we make today affect not only the future of salmon, but the future of all the other species that depend on them, including our own.

The **Wild Salmon Center (WSC)** is the only international conservation organization that strives to protect Pacific salmon and salmon habitat throughout their entire range. WSC partners with federal and regional government agencies, non-profit organizations, local communities, and business to jointly conserve the last, best wild salmon ecosystems of the North Pacific region.



Wild Salmon Center



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Help keep Kamchatka's rivers pristine!