



# WILD SALMON CENTER





Guido Rahr

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

July 2011

*On a cool spring day in 2006*, I drifted in a wood boat down a broad, fast river that flowed east in graceful curves from its headwaters in the Sikhote-Alin Mountains in the Russian Far East to the cold, blue water of the Sea of Japan. This river and canyon, with its rich forests of Korean pine, Mongolian oak, Ayan spruce, and wide gravel bars, looked like a mirror image of the famous salmon rivers of Quebec's Gaspe Peninsula.

But unlike the rivers of Canada, or anywhere else on the North American continent, this river, the Koppi, is home to a primeval assemblage of species, including Siberian tigers, wild boar, wolves, brown bears, Asian black bear, Manchurian deer, Steller's sea eagles, and the elusive salmon-eating Blakiston's fish owl. The riffles and pools of the Koppi provide spawning habitat for Amur grayling, Asian masu salmon, Dolly Varden char, white-spotted char, chum salmon, and large runs of pink salmon – a critical source of sustenance for the Udeghe people who have lived in the Koppi Watershed for thousands of years.

The Koppi is also a stronghold for the Sakhalin taimen, an endangered species of salmon that can grow to 100 pounds in size and are found only in rivers that flow into the Sea of Japan. According to mitochondrial DNA analysis, these sea-run taimen are one of the most ancient members of the salmon family.

Despite its extraordinary diversity of fish and wildlife species, the Koppi River has never received any formal habitat protections. Until now.

**On September 20, 2010** the Khabarovsk Ministry for Natural Resources established the Koppi River Reserve, protecting 200 miles of the river and 94,000 acres of key habitat within the Koppi River watershed. This event was the culmination of 10 years of work by the Wild Salmon Center and its Russian partner the Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation, led by the indefatigable Alexander Kulikov (featured on page 11).

Alexander is just one of many "salmon champions" WSC is proud to be aligned with – individuals working tirelessly to protect their local wild salmon rivers in remote reaches of the Pacific Rim. We've captured some of their stories in this year's report but could not possibly fit all that they've accomplished here, so we will be featuring full length interviews on our website.



WSC Staff

In addition to the historical achievement on the Koppi, 2010 marked other important milestones for WSC and our partners. We helped establish eight watershed councils in the Russian Far East, including the first one in Kamchatka, supported environmental education efforts targeting 10,000 people, hosted exchanges between Russian and North American sport fishing companies, recruited fifteen Russian pink salmon fisheries to enter the process for Marine Stewardship Council certification, completed the mapping and designation of salmon strongholds in California, led three coalitions to protect wild salmon and their habitat in coastal Oregon and Washington State, and convened the first international conference on the ecological effects of hatchery salmon held in Portland, Oregon.

### **A big year!**

I would like to thank you, friends of Wild Salmon Center, for your help, support, and encouragement. There are many rivers like the Koppi on both sides of the Pacific. These are our "crown jewels." But if history is any guide, we know that these extraordinary places will face the same threats and pressures that have decimated so many other rivers. We can save these strongholds, but we will need your help and the help of people like Alexander Kulikov. What better gift to leave our children and grandchildren than a legacy of salmon stronghold rivers spanning both sides of the Pacific Ocean?

Guido Rahr  
President and Chief Executive



# Protecting Salmon Across the North Pacific



*How do we conserve wild salmon for future generations?*

**Safeguard Habitat.**  
Designating protected areas to maintain enough healthy habitat to sustain wild salmon ecosystems for the long-term.

**Promote Sustainable Fisheries.**  
Ensuring that salmon continue to provide economic support and food security for the nations of the Pacific Rim through effective management.

**Share Knowledge Across Borders.**  
Working with Pacific Rim nations to accelerate adoption of best wild fish management practices.

**Build Conservation Capacity.**  
Building institutions, markets, and human communities that will support wild salmon and their ecosystems over time.

- KEY**
- WSC Project
  - Watershed Council/Regional Coalition
  - Sustainable Commercial Fishing Project





# North America

The United States' Pacific Northwest was once one of the most productive salmon producing regions on earth. But today, wild salmon runs are less than ten percent of their historic abundance and have disappeared from 40 percent of their native range.

These declines were caused by a loss of habitat, withdrawal of water for agriculture and urban use, heavy commercial and recreational fishing pressure, and the construction of dams on most Northwest rivers. The region's response to the declining wild runs was to replace lost wild fish with salmon bred in fish hatcheries. Each year the release of large quantities of hatchery fish into streams and rivers inflicts long-term damage to the remaining wild salmon and steelhead populations.

## A preventative approach

In response to the decline of wild salmon, hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent each year on salmon recovery projects. Most of this investment is directed at populations that are listed for protection under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) and are at the greatest risk of extinction. Still, long-term recovery remains elusive. Despite these high levels of investment, no salmon species has yet to be removed from the list of species afforded protection under the ESA.

**An ounce of prevention.** The WSC believes that the ESA-focused approach to salmon recovery is not enough to sustain wild salmon runs. There must also be an aggressive effort to protect the salmon populations that are still robust, before they slide into decline and require costly recovery efforts. History has shown that it's less expensive to act now than to pay heavily later to recover depleted populations.

Fortunately, throughout North America there are river systems that still sustain relatively healthy salmon populations. These include regions such as Alaska's Bristol Bay, Washington's Olympic Peninsula, Oregon's coastal rivers, Canada's Harrison River, and California's Smith River. Unless we are able to implement an effective, long-range strategy to protect these salmon strongholds, they will likely join the growing number of places in the world where wild salmon and all that they symbolize are just a memory.



WSC Staff

**Partnership and policy.** The WSC provides support to regional and local partnerships and engages state and federal policy makers to increase the resources available for stronghold conservation. In 2008, WSC launched the North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership and successfully introduced federal legislation in 2009 to focus funds on locally-supported, prevention-based strategies.

The Partnership consists of federal and state agencies, tribes, and regional NGOs in support of salmon stronghold conservation. In 2010, WSC and representatives from the Partnership testified in front of the Senate Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmosphere, Fisheries, and Coast Guard in support of the **Pacific Salmon Stronghold Conservation Act**. The legislation was successfully included in a natural resources omnibus package ("America's Great Outdoors Act"), but failed to pass despite broad bipartisan support. The WSC remains committed to advancing salmon stronghold legislation, which would address emerging threats and secure the health of these extraordinary places.

**Creating a common vision.** Spanning nearly four million acres, Washington's coastal rivers produce some of the most abundant and diverse wild Pacific salmon populations remaining south of Canada and represent some of the best remaining habitat for seven species of wild Pacific salmon and native char. The headwaters of Washington's coastal strongholds are protected by the Olympic Peninsula and include the Quillayute, Hoh, Queets, and Upper Quinault

rivers. The lowland floodplains of each river, however, are significantly degraded due to multiple fish passage barriers, clear cut forests, and residential development. In the past, the region lacked a common vision to address these problems and without a solid plan in place stakeholders were not able to secure needed funds for salmon conservation projects. To address this need, WSC collaborated with local communities to help establish two new groups dedicated to the long-term stewardship of wild salmon ecosystems: the North Pacific Coast Lead Entity and the Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership (WCSSP).

Together we are working to build the political, technical, and financial capacity to safeguard the region's salmon strongholds. In 2010, with support from WSC, WCSSP was able to secure **\$1.8 million in funds for 15 habitat based projects that will protect and restore threatened lowland areas in western Washington** and reopen historic migratory routes for salmon to the Olympic Peninsula's pristine headwaters. To date, eight projects are underway that will improve salmon access to 14.4 river miles and 19 acres of wetland. The WSC also collaborated with The Nature Conservancy and WCSSP to create a **regional salmon plan for the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office**. This plan articulates a common vision to conserve the region's wild salmon populations and the habitat salmon utilize across their entire life cycle. It is the first in the region to explicitly focus conservation actions on wild salmon and steelhead management.

Olympic Peninsula, Washington

The Olympic Peninsula provides some of the best remaining habitat south of Canada for Pacific salmon, including chum and coho (pictured right).



Barrie Kovich



Champion for wild salmon: Miles Batchelder

Miles readily admits his most valuable skill in his first year with the Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership (WCSSP) was listening—specifically, gathering from stakeholders, who have been working on salmon restoration within their own watersheds for more than a decade, what they wanted from a regional organization. As Executive Director of WCSSP he is currently working with partners such as WSC to draft a Regional Salmon Sustainability Plan which outlines an ambitious ecosystem-based strategy built on partnership. His challenge is to find agreement among very diverse stakeholders—including timber companies, commercial fishers, municipalities, NGOs, and treaty tribes—about how to fundamentally shift how we live on the land.

*People in the Olympic Peninsula understand that salmon are inextricably linked to the identities of their communities and cultures. Our primary goal is to ensure that people's actions reflect the important relationship they have with the region's salmon and their watersheds.*



## NORTH AMERICA

### Science-based strategies

WSC has been working closely with a range of partners in North America to bring cutting-edge science to the identification and protection of wild salmon strongholds. The identification process relies on local and regional experts to “score” wild salmon populations based on three criteria: population abundance; life cycle diversity; and percent natural origin (a measure of hatchery influence). By combining the data with other factors like watershed health and distribution across eco-regions, we are able to identify wild salmon strongholds.

Together with regional experts we have **evaluated over 800 distinct wild salmon populations** in river systems throughout California, western Washington, and Oregon. In 2010, the North American Salmon Stronghold Partnership **formally recognized six strongholds across California's six eco-regions**. With our partners we are now identifying common threats across the strongholds and seeking the technical, financial, and political resources necessary to secure their long-term health.

▼ **Bristol Bay** rivers in Alaska support diverse and robust salmon populations. WSC has completed analysis of potential impacts of proposed large-scale mining to this area with a report to be released in 2011.



Ken Morrish, Fly Water Travel



Ken Morrish, Fly Water Travel

**Land for salmon.** In 2004, Washington's Hoh River was a patchwork of public and private lands with no uniting entity to manage one of the best remaining salmon strongholds in the U.S. WSC saw an opportunity and partnered with Western Rivers Conservancy to found the Hoh River Trust. In 2010, the Trust reached a major milestone, now permanently protecting over **7,000 acres of uninterrupted salmon habitat from headwaters to ocean**.

In partnership with The Nature Conservancy (TNC), two new tracts of land have been set aside for the protection of salmon and wildlife. In Oregon, WSC was the primary funder in the acquisition of **70 acres of wetlands in the Tillamook Bay watershed** along the Kilchis River—key habitat for fall Chinook and the most important stronghold for chum salmon south of the Columbia River. The region is also home to steelhead, cutthroat trout, and coho, supporting fisheries along much of the northwest coast. In Washington, WSC helped TNC leverage funds for the acquisition and restoration of nearly **3,000 acres of coho, steelhead, and Chinook habitat along an eleven mile corridor of the Clearwater River**. We also granted funds to the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board to explore an innovative land exchange process within the Wenatchee River basin, which boasts strong populations of sockeye and fall Chinook.

**Oregon's North Coast.** Lying between Portland, Oregon and the Pacific Ocean is a vast stretch of temperate rain forest and free-flowing rivers that are almost completely

encompassed by the 518,000 acre Tillamook and Clatsop State Forest. The Trask, Wilson, Kilchis, Miami, Nehalem, and Salmonberry rivers are home to extraordinary runs of wild fall Chinook and winter steelhead, as well as spring Chinook, coho, and chum salmon and rainbow and sea-run cutthroat trout. These watersheds also provide critical wildlife habitat, clean water, flood control, carbon sequestration, and significant recreation opportunities.

While the habitat for wild salmon in the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forest is relatively healthy today, there have been repeated proposals by coastal counties, the timber industry, and the Oregon state legislature to change the overriding policies that govern management of the Tillamook to make timber production the primary goal. This would lead to extensive clear cuts, road building, and damage to key salmon spawning and rearing watersheds.

Since 2008, WSC has spearheaded a broad conservation coalition to defend Oregon's North Coast. In 2010, WSC succeeded in stopping legislation that would mandate extensive clear cutting in some of the most important areas for salmon conservation. The WSC advocated for an independent scientific review by the Institute for Natural Resources at Oregon State University to determine the impacts of increased logging to salmon habitat. The WSC also worked with Oregon's Governor and Oregon Board of Forestry to promote the creation of protected areas for salmon and wildlife.

The Tillamook offers habitat for salmon and wildlife, as well as clean water, carbon sequestration, air quality, wetlands, diverse forest products, and recreation opportunities.



WSC Staff



#### Champion for wild salmon: Ian Ferguson

Ian's love of wild salmon began when he volunteered to help with winter steelhead surveys on the Salmonberry River in northwest Oregon. On the Salmonberry, the

dominant land uses are timber harvest and a now-defunct railroad. Ian is committed to championing land management that will allow wild fish to thrive. *"Salmon are creatures defined by abundance, and I'd like to see obstacles removed so they have a chance to be abundant again."* A number of Ian's original 1993 volunteer crew still show up for the salmon count and, along with providing good data, he sees this project as an opportunity to educate and create new ambassadors for wild fish.

Ian is currently on the Board of the Association of Northwest Steelheaders where he learned of WSC's work on forest policy. "Some interests are very adept at framing the conversation as jobs vs. the environment. Overcoming that single-minded approach calls for putting an emphasis on the economic and social values of healthy fish populations and clean water and continually coming back to the science that connects land use practices with watershed health."





## Western Pacific

The Western Pacific region, encompassing the Russian Far East and Japan, contains some of the world's most diverse, productive, and healthy freshwater and marine ecosystems. Russia alone accounts for over 40 percent of all wild Pacific salmon and is a global priority for the conservation of salmon and the myriad of species they sustain.

Russia's remote coastal regions, sparsely populated and long buffered by their isolated location, face growing pressures from developing countries for the region's rich oil, natural gas, mineral, and fishery resources. Similar threats caused the decline of wild salmon along the Atlantic coast of Europe and the east and west coasts of North America.

## Safeguarding habitat

The single most important investment in the long-term health of wild salmon is the protection of habitat, ideally at the scale of whole watersheds. History has shown that once the habitat is damaged or lost, it is very difficult and expensive to restore. The Russian Far East offers the most important remaining opportunity left to gain protected status for large salmon-producing watersheds. This is in part because the region is sparsely populated by humans and the land is primarily owned by the Russian Government, which in the past century backed the creation of one of the world's most extensive protected area systems.

The WSC has been working to support Russian efforts to protect twelve major salmon strongholds on the Russian mainland, Sakhalin Island, and the Kamchatka Peninsula. Russia has already designated three of these as regional nature reserves (zakazniks) and several more are very close to becoming established. These efforts represent priceless contributions not just to the ecological and economic health of the Russian Far East, but to the food security of all of the nations of the Pacific Rim who depend on salmon.

Will these efforts continue to be supported at the federal level? The last year has seen some encouraging signs from the Russian federal government. Russia's leaders have championed the conservation of habitat for flagship species such as Siberian tigers and advocated for a 30 percent increase in federal funding for protected areas in 2011.



Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation

Prime Minister Putin declared the importance of protected areas for creating economic opportunities, such as ecotourism. Additionally, President Medvedev acknowledged the need for a greater role of NGOs and civil societies in finding solutions to Russia's environmental challenges.

**Exploring new opportunities.** Federal Fishery Protected Zones (FFPZs), first proposed in 2009, represent a significant step in the conservation of wild salmon rivers in Russia. They aim to identify and protect a network of commercially and biologically valuable wild salmon ecosystems. In 2010, WSC worked with Russian federal agencies and scientific institutions to **develop criteria and a list of candidate salmon rivers**. A number of priority rivers where WSC works were nominated, including the Opala and the Utkholok/Kvachina rivers on the Kamchatka Peninsula, the Dagi and Langry rivers on Sakhalin Island, and the Nimelen River in Khabarovsk Krai. Work is currently underway to grant these and other rivers protected status.

**Strengthening existing protections.** WSC worked with partners in 2010 to implement new management practices for Kamchatka's Kol Salmon Refuge, the first headwaters-to-ocean salmon refuge in Russia. The new plan will improve protection for salmon by clearly defining the park's borders and regulations, making it easier for violators to be prosecuted. Recreation, fishing, and other economic

activities will now be regulated, and strict protection of salmon spawning grounds will be enforced.

**Koppi River Reserve.** After a decade of work, the Koppi River Regional Nature Reserve was established and will now safeguard wild salmon and the rich biodiversity of the Koppi River watershed. In partnership with the Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation and the Khabarovsk Ministry of Natural Resources, over **94,000 acres of habitat, including 200 miles of the Koppi River, will be permanently protected.**

The Koppi's undammed and undeveloped floodplains provide excellent spawning and rearing habitat for more than 20 species of fish. The reserve will also provide key protections for a wide range of rare species, including the Manchurian deer, Siberian tiger, and nesting species of rare fish-eating birds such as Blakiston's fish owl, Chinese merganser, white-tailed sea eagle, and Steller's sea eagle.

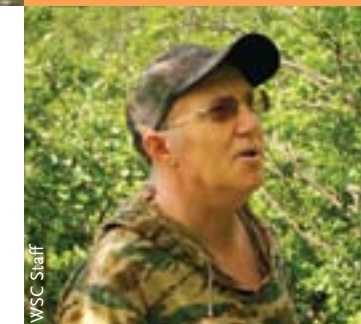
The designation of the reserve has important implications for local communities that depend on the Koppi River for commercial fisheries and a healthy supply of drinking water. The Koppi River Public Salmon Council, created in early 2011, will act as a regional governing body to coordinate sustainable watershed management and anti-poaching efforts, and to discuss regional development opportunities such as ecotourism and catch-and-release sport fishing.

Koppi River, Khabarovsk

The Koppi River is home to more than 20 species of fish, including pink, chum, and masu salmon, char, and the critically endangered Sakhalin taimen (pictured right).



Barrie Kovish



WSC Staff

### Champion for wild salmon: Alexander Kulikov

It was almost 20 years ago when Alexander Kulikov helped form the Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation with a group of like-minded scientists.

Initially, he focused his work

on protection of the rare and beautiful Amur tiger, which lead him to the realization that no species can thrive without healthy habitat and an abundant food source. "Another species that needs protection is wild salmon; it is very important for the local ecology and communities not only as a source of nutrition but also as a symbol of clean water and healthy ecosystems," noted Kulikov.

A shared vision of establishing Russia's Shantar Islands as a National Park initially brought Kulikov and Wild Salmon Center together in 2006. Since then, we have also joined efforts to initiate protections for the Nimelen and Tugur rivers and successfully created the Koppi River Reserve. Despite bureaucratic obstacles and delays, Kulikov says he is more committed than ever to seeing that salmon strongholds are protected for the benefit of all. **"Creation of any protected area is a complex and prolonged process that requires a lot of patience and excellent partnerships."**



# Building conservation capacity

In rural coastal communities throughout the Russian Far East, salmon fisheries affect the lives of nearly every resident and in some regions employ up to half the population. Salmon constitute a vital source of protein and are critical to the culture, traditions, and economies of Russians, particularly those in coastal communities and indigenous peoples who depend on salmon for sustenance.

**Empowering local stewards of rivers.** WSC has made tremendous progress in building conservation capacity through the Sakhalin Salmon Initiative (SSI), launched jointly in 2006 with Sakhalin Energy Investment Company. One of the primary achievements of the SSI has been the creation of a network of public watershed councils based on the best examples of community-led watershed conservation initiatives in the Pacific Northwest. Watershed councils develop and implement strategies to reduce poaching, improve monitoring, and restore salmon habitat. Each council focuses on projects to address the most significant threats to their local salmon rivers.

▼ The International Kol Biostation in Kamchatka's **Kol River Salmon Refuge** has become an outdoor laboratory for scientists and students to study one of the world's most genetically diverse and pristine wild salmon rivers. In 2010, management was transferred to the Aquatic Resources Department of the Kamchatka State Technical University. Data collected has shown that the regions' salmon have successfully maintained their genetic diversity and abundance.



Kuril Lake, Kamchatka Peninsula

Russia's South Kamchatka Federal Nature Reserve is home to the largest sockeye salmon population in the Western Pacific, supporting wildlife and thriving fishing communities.



**Putting an end to poaching.** Poaching has reached epic proportions in Russia with an estimated 200-400 million salmon harvested illegally each year. In addition to putting future salmon runs at risk, poaching takes away jobs from honest, working Russians and siphons income from the country's economy. To respond directly to this threat, each of **Sakhalin's six active watershed councils have formed community anti-poaching groups**. In 2010, community groups set up vehicle inspection points, kept 24-hour surveillance of spawning rivers, and carried out more than 360 raids throughout Sakhalin. More than 75 poaching nets were destroyed on the Langry River and 152 violators were cited in the Aniva district. The councils have also organized river clean-up crews and outreach programs to educate people on the devastating impacts of poaching and created an anti-poaching hotline where concerned members of the public can provide information to local enforcement agencies.

Russia has also strengthened anti-poaching efforts in protected areas. Patrols in 2010 resulted in decreased poaching on Kamchatka's Kol and Zhupanova rivers. **Poaching and other violations have been nearly eliminated on the Vostochny Nature Refuge** on Sakhalin Island, which encompasses two pristine headwaters-to-ocean salmon rivers.

**Replicating successful strategies.** Building on the initial success of the Sakhalin watershed councils, fishing communities in the Kamchatka and Khabarovsk regions have established their own councils. Community leaders from these two regions attended council workshops on Sakhalin in 2010 and learned about building stakeholder support and developing strategies for watershed management, community outreach, anti-poaching, and fundraising.

After seeing firsthand the benefits of the Sakhalin watershed council network, in January 2011, communities in **Kamchatka and Khabarovsk Krai created the first public watershed councils outside of Sakhalin**. In Khabarovsk, the Koppi River Public Salmon Council will unite stakeholders to protect the Koppi watershed, including the recently established nature reserve. On Kamchatka, "Save the Salmon Coalition" joined efforts with the Ust-Bolsheretsk Administration to create a public watershed council. The region's thriving sockeye populations support commercial and sport fishing economies, as well as the livelihoods of local communities and indigenous groups. The local community is now actively involved in coordinating the protection of the area's salmon rivers.



Champion for wild salmon: Sergei Vakhnin

Sergei's work in salmon conservation began over 40 years ago with the publication of an article about salmon fisheries in a local Kamchatka newspaper. Since then, he has

published numerous articles, magazines, and short films and today runs "Fish Kamchatka," the most popular web-site on Kamchatka's fishing industry. *"Rampant corruption in the fishing industry made it clear to me that not only do we need to reflect what is happening in the fishing industry, but we also need to be able to influence the process."* As the coordinator of the "Save the Salmon Coalition," he helps conduct regular monitoring of salmon fisheries on Kamchatka and across Russia. The Coalition has done extensive work on the integration of public organizations, developed plans for reducing illegal catch of salmon, and conducted a strong anti drift-net campaign. After attending a seminar on Sakhalin Island co-hosted by WSC in 2009 and seeing the success of their public watershed councils, Sergei concluded that getting the local community directly involved was the best solution for Kamchatka as well. In 2010, he worked with WSC and partners to establish Kamchatka's first watershed council (Ust-Bolsheretsky Council), for which he now serves as Vice-Chairman.



# International cooperation

In 2010, WSC worked under the auspices of U.S.-Russian bilateral agreements to support wild salmon conservation. Through the U.S.-Russia Cooperative Agreement for the Conservation of Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat (Area V), the Russian American Pacific Partnership (RAPP), and the U.S.-Russian Bilateral Presidential Commission’s Environmental Working Group, WSC made recommendations for improving wild fish management practices and exchanging experiences on salmon conservation between Russia and the U.S.

**Engaging industry.** WSC is working with industries in the Russian Far East to reduce the impact of development of gas and mineral deposits on pristine salmon rivers and coastal ecosystems. At the 2010 Sakhalin Oil and Gas Conference, WSC President Guido Rahr moderated the roundtable discussion of environmental protection and safety, engaging with major representatives of the oil

▼ Appreciation of wild salmon starts at an early age for the people of Sakhalin Island. In 2010, over 4,000 participated in SSI’s **salmon education programs**, including students from the Poronaik District (below) sharing work from their class project “Salmon and us - together we can do more.”



Sakhalin Salmon Initiative



Clemens Ratschan

Dagi River, Sakhalin Island

The Dagi River is one of the few remaining strongholds for Sakhalin taimen. WSC’s research here will be used to gain protection for this endangered species across its entire range.



and gas industry from Russia and abroad regarding the importance of conserving wild salmon ecosystems. WSC is collaborating with key players in the mining industry on Kamchatka to reduce impacts of **gold and platinum mining** on salmon ecosystems. The WSC engaged top experts to draft a monitoring program to assess consequences of **seismic testing** on salmon migrations in waters off the West Kamchatka Shelf. This work was presented to Gazprom, Russia’s largest natural gas developer. The WSC enlisted Kamchatka experts to study the impacts of a **gas pipeline and access road** constructed on priority salmon habitat in west Kamchatka, an area which includes the Kol River where an estimated five million fish return each year.

**Promoting ecotourism and sport fishing.** In 2010, the Russian Salmon Fund and WSC hosted an international conference in Russia—Sport Fishing, Watershed Management and Salmon Conservation—to share experiences among tour operators, fishermen, and other groups that benefit from wild salmon rivers. WSC also helped organize **an exchange in Alaska for Russian sport fishing, hunting, and tourism outfitters** to learn about successful fly fishing operations and how businesses can promote stewardship, conservation advocacy, and the sustainable treatment of resources.

**Educating new leaders.** In 2010, the Sakhalin Salmon Initiative (SSI) succeeded in reaching a new generation of salmon advocates with nearly **4,000 students and citizens involved in environmental education and public awareness programs**. Salmon curricula have been integrated into 40 primary and secondary education schools in the Sakhalin Region, and over 200 students took part in snorkel surveys to study spawning salmon. SSI also organized the “Live, Salmon!” festival which attracted 300 students and guests from seven districts of Sakhalin. The second International Salmon Forum hosted 24 Sakhalin and U.S. students on Sakhalin Island to learn about salmon conservation. Construction has begun on Russia’s first **Salmon Park** where an eco-education center, trail, and outdoor research station on Sakhalin’s Lutoga River will connect the community to salmon and their habitat.

In 2010, outreach activities of the **Kol River Salmon Refuge** reached **5,000 students** in camps, beach clean-ups, conferences, exhibits, and 132 other ecological education activities.



WSC Staff

## Champion for wild salmon: Natalia Kizimova

Natalia was working as a history teacher on Sakhalin Island when she found herself drawn to environmental projects. With over 50% of the population employed in the

salmon industry, she realized salmon were the ideal vehicle for teaching conservation. “*I wanted students to understand, at an early age, the importance of protecting nature.*” Natalia first learned of WSC through the Sakhalin Salmon Initiative (SSI), a program launched with support of Sakhalin Energy Investment Company and WSC. Through programs such as *Salmon Watch* and *Droplet*, children of all ages study salmon ecology. “Before SSI, nobody was really reaching out to the community to teach them about salmon and river conservation; they got used to salmon being an inexhaustible resource.” Today, more than 40 educational institutions in the region participate in salmon education programs developed as part of Natalia’s project. SSI has collaborated with the Ministry of Education of Sakhalin, a variety of environmental specialists, and teachers like Natalia to reach over 5,000 people since its launch in 2007.



PACIFIC RIM

Promoting sustainable fisheries

If we manage our wild salmon wisely, they will continue to nourish human communities and ecosystems as well as provide long-term food and economic security for the nations of the Pacific Rim.

The Sustainable Fisheries and Markets Program combines WSC’s technical, scientific, and collaborative strengths with the power of the global marketplace to leverage improvements in wild salmon fishery management. WSC’s goal is to make sustainable salmon fisheries more profitable, thereby rewarding fishermen whose operations meet strict sustainability criteria. WSC is:

- Supporting third-party certification assessments of Pacific salmon fisheries. For those fisheries not yet certified, we provide a road map to certification and related fishery improvements via technical, scientific, and logistical assistance.
- Assisting the development of a legal and sustainable supply chain of Pacific salmon by implementing traceability systems that help the market distinguish and prioritize legal and sustainable sourced over illegal and unsustainable sourced salmon.
- Investing in additional verification and enforcement measures such as independent observers and anti-poaching brigades.



Sakhalin Environment Watch



Sakhalin Salmon Initiative

**The ongoing fight against illegal fisheries.** Illegal, unreported, or unregulated (IUU) fisheries are the paramount threat to wild salmon fisheries in Russia. Across the Russian Far East **illegal catch of Pacific salmon is estimated to be at least 1.4 times and possibly as great as 1.8 times the legally reported catch.** The illegal market is extremely lucrative for those involved. Salmon are just one component of an illegal seafood trade estimated at \$3 billion for Kamchatka alone. With growing amounts of Russian salmon products entering international markets, it is increasingly important that illegal harvest is addressed. If you include IUU fisheries, estimates suggest that some salmon fisheries in Russia may be experiencing catch rates upwards of 90% of the total run. Wild salmon populations cannot sustain such extreme catch rates without suffering severe declines.

While there is no silver bullet, there are things that can be done to push back against the tide of illegal fisheries. By tracing salmon from “net to plate” we can differentiate and enhance the value of verifiably legal and sustainable salmon fisheries. By supporting independent observers and

◀ Locally organized groups, such as the Nogliki Watershed Council on Sakhalin Island, combat illegal fishing with anti-poaching brigades that patrol vulnerable salmon rivers.

community enforcement brigades, we put more “eyes on the river” and increase the likelihood of detection, arrest, and prosecution of illegal fishing operations.

**Shifting tides.** Salmon fuel a \$3 billion a year industry and are one of the top three U.S. seafood products. Until recently, Alaska’s fisheries were the only salmon fisheries awarded the coveted Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) ecolabel. But in 2009, the Iturup Island pink and chum salmon fishery in the Kuril Islands became the first fishery in Russia to achieve MSC certification. Since then, with support from WSC and partners, **an additional fifteen pink salmon fishing companies from Sakhalin and two sockeye fishing companies from Kamchatka have entered the MSC assessment process.** The WSC is engaging these and other fisheries in Russia and Japan to help them improve their harvest and management practices in order to achieve certification standards.

**Want to track MSC projects across the Pacific Rim?** Check out WSC’s Visual MSC tool and see the latest results from Russia to Alaska, BC, and the Pacific Northwest: [stateofthesalmon.org/msc/](http://stateofthesalmon.org/msc/)

Salmon fuel a \$3 billion industry that puts \$2.8 million pounds of nutrient-rich protein on dinner tables around the world each year.



WSC Staff

Champion for wild salmon: Vladimir Smirnov

Vladimir is taking the “good fight” directly to the poachers and other malevolent forces that would harm wild salmon and their river ecosystems. He is also an active community

member and successful businessman who works with the local community and officials to address issues that affect wild salmon. Vladimir initially fished for crab in the coastal waters of Sakhalin Island, but switched to salmon when he saw an opportunity to affect positive change in the fishing industry. He launched the Plavnik Fishing Company and was one of the first in his region to take on illegal fishing. “When we first arrived in the Smirnykhovsky region, illegal fishing was out of control.” Upon learning that a hatchery was planned near his fishery, he successfully lobbied the government to block the hatchery construction and preserve the genetic diversity of the wild salmon populations already there in abundance. Vladimir eventually became a founding member of the Sakhalin Salmon Initiative. In 2010, the Plavnik Fishing Company became one of the fifteen fishing companies to enter full MSC assessment. *“We need to continue to fight against illegal fishing. We must continue to work hard on this and never surrender!”*



## PACIFIC RIM

## Sharing knowledge across borders

In the past, the lack of easily accessible information on the status of wild salmon and an understanding of how that status relates to specific fishery management strategies has been a serious impediment to the conservation of wild salmon.

The WSC and its partner Ecotrust sought to remedy that problem in 2003 by launching [State of the Salmon \(SoS\)](#). A key vision of the program has been to create international forums where salmon managers, scientists, and conservationists from watersheds across the Pacific Rim can learn from each other's successes and failures and work together to accelerate the adoption of science-based standards for wild salmon conservation.

**Improving international standards.** In 2010, WSC partnered with international organizations to promote the adoption of practices for fisheries harvest and hatchery operations to ensure the sustainability of wild salmon populations. SoS worked with the Marine Stewardship Council to [strengthen the criteria used to certify fisheries](#)

▼ **Tom Brokaw** delivered the keynote speech at WSC's 2010 Spring Dinner, calling for the need to strengthen protections for wild salmon ecosystems across the Pacific Rim.



Tristan McCallister



Sam Bebe, Ecotrust

as sustainable. SoS also worked with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to develop ecolabeling guidelines for fish and fishery products for freshwater fisheries.

**Reducing impacts of hatchery salmon.** Over the last 100 years, there has been a steady increase in the development of fish hatcheries across the Pacific, mainly to compensate for the reduction of wild salmon populations due primarily to habitat loss and overfishing. Hatchery fish are not a replacement for wild fish that spawn and die in a naturally functioning ecosystem. Hatcheries pose a real long-term threat to wild salmon, weakening genetic diversity and competing with wild salmon for limited food and habitat. These ecological impacts are expected to be more acute as climate change reduces viable marine and freshwater habitat.

To better understand and minimize the impact of hatcheries, SoS convened [the first international conference on the ecological interactions between wild and hatchery salmon](#). The conference brought together over 300 participants from Japan, Russia, Canada, and the U.S. to address the scale and nature of hatchery impacts on wild salmon diversity and productivity in marine and freshwater

environments. Attendees also explored the risk assessment tools and management strategies needed to manage these impacts. In 2011 SoS will host a follow-up workshop to explore Climate & Salmon: Managing Responses of Salmon to Climate Change.

**Tracking progress.** SoS is working with partners to build transparent and publicly accessible information on salmon populations so that managers can better track the success of current management programs and improve their accountability to the public. In 2010, SoS collaborated with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to create a [website that tracks the status of Oregon's recovery programs for salmon and steelhead](#) listed as threatened or endangered ([odfwrecoverytracker.org](http://odfwrecoverytracker.org)). SoS is also working with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Canada toward building a similar solution for [tracking how well fishery agencies are meeting salmon management objectives](#). In 2011, SoS will launch a web application with conservation planning tools to assist managers and watershed conservation groups and other practitioners in choosing the best strategies and places for protecting and restoring wild salmon populations.

The release of juvenile hatchery salmon has steadily increased to about 5 billion fish per year. It is estimated that more than one in five salmon now originate from hatcheries.



Igor Sripilevok



Sam Bebe, Ecotrust

### Champion for wild salmon: Randall Lewis

Randall comes from a long line of salmon conservationists within the Squamish Nation that have cherished wild salmon runs for their food and cultural significance for

thousands of years. As the Squamish Nation Environmental Coordinator and President of the Squamish River Watershed Society, he has worked tirelessly with local stakeholders, governmental agencies, and the Squamish Nation to restore habitat and rebuild wild fish runs.

The Squamish River has one hatchery that was built years ago, but the Squamish Nation made the choice in the 1970s not to support the construction of additional hatcheries. *"We didn't want hatcheries to compete with our wild salmon runs - we didn't believe our future should be built on trying to use hatchery fish to replace wild production lost from further habitat destruction."* When Randall attended the 2010 State of the Salmon Conference, he was impressed by the science-based discussions on the impacts of hatcheries and is more committed than ever to strengthening the ecological health of the Squamish watershed for the future.



Statement of Activities

For the fiscal year ending December 31, 2010

	2010
REVENUE	
Foundations	\$2,720,697
Individuals	875,266
Governments	278,252
Corporations	1,164,543
Investments and other income	256,225
Total revenue	5,294,983
EXPENSES	
Program Services:	
North America Program	1,381,740
Western Pacific Program	2,825,642
Sustainable Fisheries	572,019
State of the Salmon/Conservation Science	600,446
Total program expenses	5,379,847
Support Services:	
Management and General	449,866
Development and Fundraising	570,195
Total expenses	6,399,908
Change in net assets	(1,104,925)
Net assets at the beginning of the year	5,362,657
Net assets at the end of the year	\$4,257,732

\* The funds available to cover our 2010 annual expenses included new revenue (i.e., received and recorded in 2010) plus revenue received and recorded in previous years (e.g., 2008 and 2009) for work to be carried out in 2010. While expenses exceeded new revenue in 2010, the total funds available was sufficient to cover all expenses.

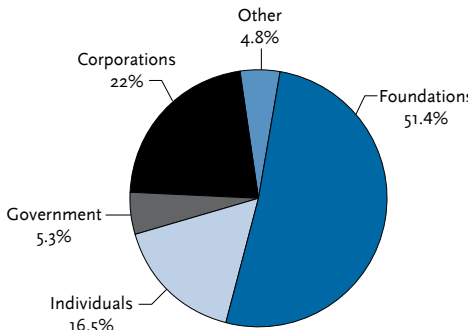


Charity Navigator has awarded Wild Salmon Center its highest 4-star rating for sound fiscal management. Charity Navigator evaluates the financial health of 4,000 of America's largest charities.

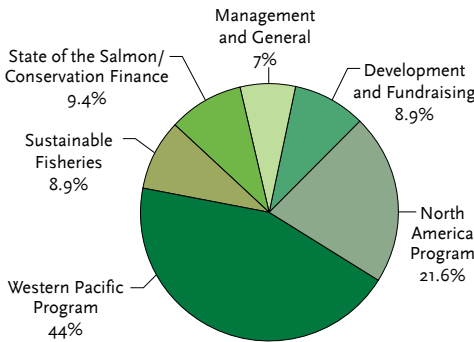


The Wild Salmon Center has been awarded The Independent Charities' "Best in America" Seal of Excellence by the Independent Charities of America and Local Independent Charities of America. This signifies that, upon rigorous independent review, the organization met the highest standards of public accountability,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

FY 2010 Operation Revenue: \$5,294,983\*



FY 2010 Total Expenses: \$6,399,908



Right: The Steller's sea eagle, found in Kamchatka and other regions of the Russian Far East, is one of at least 137 species that use salmon as a food source.





PARTNERS

United States

Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
American Fisheries Society  
Audubon Society of Portland  
Bonneville Power Administration  
Bristol Bay Working Group  
California Department of Fish and Game  
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Sustainable Fisheries Partnership  
Trace Register  
United Nations Development Programme/Global Environment Facility  
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Right: Salmon smokehouses are an Alaskan tradition and have helped provide subsistence for generations of Bristol Bay residents.



Ben Knight



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Champion for wild salmon: *Werner K. Paulus*

Vern Paulus joined Wild Salmon Center’s Board of Directors in 1996—just four years after the organization’s founding—and provided the vision, leadership, and financial support that have been integral to WSC’s growth and its accomplishments over the past fifteen years.

“Under Vern’s watch WSC grew from a small organization with just \$25,000 in the bank to the international organization it is today with a staff of over 30 and programs throughout the Pacific Rim,” said President Guido Rahr.

During his tenure on WSC’s Board, Vern played a critical role in the organization’s development by leading strategic planning efforts and Board recruitment, and leveraging his financial support to raise additional funds from other donors. Vern has been one of WSC’s most generous contributors and his support has been instrumental to several landmark victories including the protection of salmon and steelhead habitat on the Olympic Peninsula and the creation of landscape-scale protected areas in the Russian Far East. Vern also traveled to many of WSC’s distant program sites including the Koppi River basin and the Shantar Islands in the Russian Far East.

Despite stepping down as a Board member in 2010, Vern plans to continue offering his guidance and support to WSC as it builds on its past progress. “He was the ‘wise man’ of the Board. He took his responsibilities as a Board Member very seriously. Although he didn’t dominate meetings, when Vern spoke we hung on his every word. The Wild Salmon Center would not be the organization it is today without Vern Paulus,” said Guido.

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Wild Salmon Center has been approved to receive grants through the 1% for the Planet program.



Dr. Gordon Reeves, Guido Rahr, and Sarah LaBorde testify in Washington D.C. to support salmon stronghold legislation.

Inside front cover and back cover: Brown bears in Russia's South Kamchatka Federal Nature Reserve. (Igor Shpilenok)

Special thanks to: Igor Shpilenok (shpilenok.com), Ben Knight, and Ken Morrish (Fly Water Travel) for their beautiful photos.

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## WILD SALMON CENTER

The mission of the Wild Salmon Center is to identify, understand and protect the best wild salmon ecosystems of the Pacific Rim.



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