

WILD SALMON CENTER



2014 Annual Report



Letter from the President

It was a moment I will never forget. It was September 20, 2014 and I was in a Mi-8 helicopter flying northeast from the city of Khabarovsk in the Russian Far East. I was on my way to a river I had dreamed about for many years: the Tugur.

Looking below, and as far as I could see in any direction, was a landscape of fall colors—an endless tapestry of orange peat bogs, vivid yellow stands of tamarack, white and yellow birch trees, green patches of Korean pine, and red groves of alder. Woven throughout were rivers, beautiful freestone streams. And in those streams were Amur grayling, lenok, char, wild runs of chum and pink salmon, and the largest river trout on earth: a race of giant Siberian taimen that exceeds 100 pounds in weight, larger than any member of the salmon family.

We have less and less rivers like the Tugur left in the world. Many of the great salmon rivers that flow into the Pacific have been crippled by development and overfishing. The Columbia, Fraser, and Amur rivers all are just a fraction of their former health. The drought in California has put the future of the Sacramento as a salmon river into real jeopardy.

The next fifty years will see expanding pressure on forests and rivers, driven by dramatic increases in human population and development. Climate change will exert even more stress. The damage is already climbing northward on both sides of the Pacific Rim. It is just a matter of time before rivers like the Tugur and the neighboring Nimelen—together over six million acres of pristine forests, wetland, and streams—are under siege.

How can we ensure that these great stronghold rivers survive, so that we can deliver them to the next generation? Can we prevent history from repeating itself in our best remaining rivers?

The answer lies in large part with strong community-based organizations. They have the knowledge and authenticity to navigate local politics, and the ability to leverage residents' passion for their home waters. They are the first and last line of defense. But they often do not have the resources to win against well-funded international mining conglomerates, or government-backed dam projects.

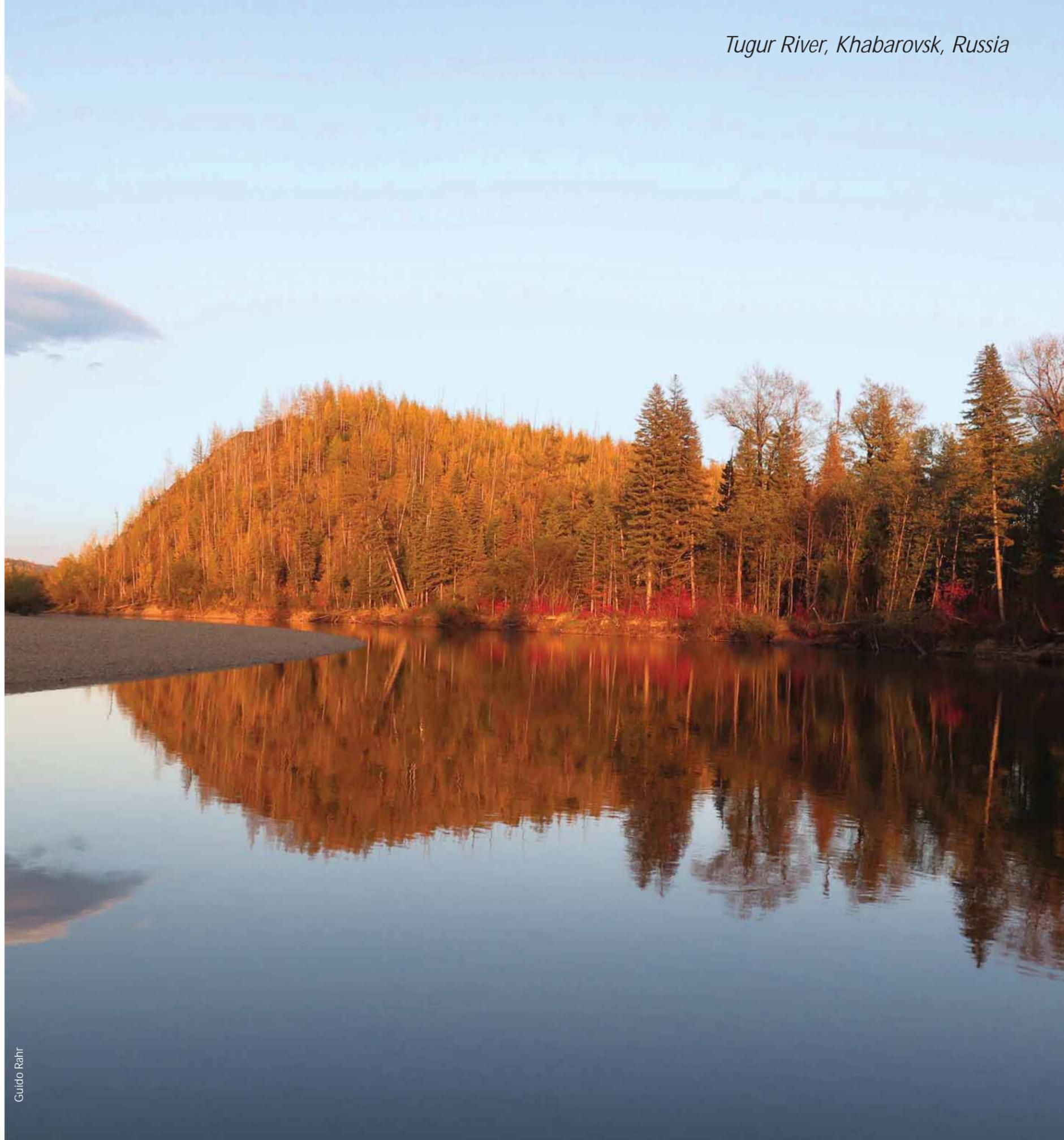
This is why the Wild Salmon Center is focusing our resources on supporting local partners in each of the stronghold river systems. WSC has helped create eight organizations and supported dozens more over the years. We provide funding, legal support, communications strategy, scientific expertise—whatever they need. Our job is to help these groups win.

Some of you met a few of our partners and learned more about them at our fall event in Seattle—partners like SkeenaWild in northern British Columbia and the Susitna River Coalition in Alaska.

Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation in the Russian Far East is another great example; their home territory includes the Tugur. Under the leadership of Alexander Kulikov, the federation led the push to secure the protection of the 1.2 million acre Shantar Islands archipelago and the nearby 197,000-acre Tugursky Nature Reserve. And he is just getting started (see page 20). To date, we and our partners have protected habitat or improved protections for wild fish on more than 10,000 miles of rivers around the North Pacific.

Thank you for helping us build an organization that allows our partners to succeed. When they win, we all win. There is a lot at stake: the protection of the most productive and beautiful wild salmon rivers along the Pacific Rim. But with your support, we can secure these rivers' future.

Guido Rahr
President and Chief Executive



Guido Rahr



YEAR AT A GLANCE
2014 Highlights



Tugursky Nature Reserve
Conserves One of Russia's
Largest Untouched Rivers



A Wild Salmon Territory for
the Russian Far East



Reversing the Decline of
Taimen in Japan and Russia



Gaining Ground to Stop the
Susitna Dam



Defending the Skeena
Against a Wave of
Development



Creating Sanctuaries for
Wild Salmon & Steelhead on
the Oregon Coast



Keeping California
Stronghold Rivers Cold

Defending the Skeena Against a Wave of Development

They call it “Mother Skeena.” The phrase describing British Columbia’s second longest river speaks volumes to its fertility and sanctity, which nurtures those who live along its banks and inflames the passion of anglers who long to one day fish its mainstem or famed tributaries—the Bulkley, Babine, Copper, Kispiox and Sustut. One of the world’s most prolific wild salmon and steelhead corridors, the undammed watershed serves as spawning ground for six salmon species, including coho, sockeye and some of the largest Chinook and steelhead ever recorded. The Skeena’s commercial and sport fisheries generate over \$100 million a year, rivaling the economic impact of the forest industry.

But the Skeena watershed’s long-term well-being is at risk. More than \$100 billion in oil and natural gas projects have been proposed for the region, including a liquefied natural gas terminal in the lower Skeena’s estuary and intertidal areas, which provide critical habitat for juvenile salmon, smelt, and migratory waterfowl.

The small but powerful British Columbia-based SkeenaWild Conservation Trust has mobilized local communities and worked alongside tribes and conservation advocates to fight for this globally important salmon stronghold. In recent years, they have effectively rallied alongside First Nations and community groups to derail the potentially damaging Enbridge pipeline, lobbied for government protections for wild fish, and supported First Nations subsistence fisheries targeting healthy fish runs.

In 2014, SkeenaWild turned to Wild Salmon Center for strategic guidance to amplify their efforts. WSC will boost the organization’s fundraising and communications capacity and allow SkeenaWild to draw on our global conservation expertise as they confront the forces of the global hydrocarbon economy. We are working with SkeenaWild to mobilize all Skeena supporters—locals and visitors alike—to join the groundswell of protectors and ensure this river and its tributaries continue to support thriving communities and wild fish long into the future.

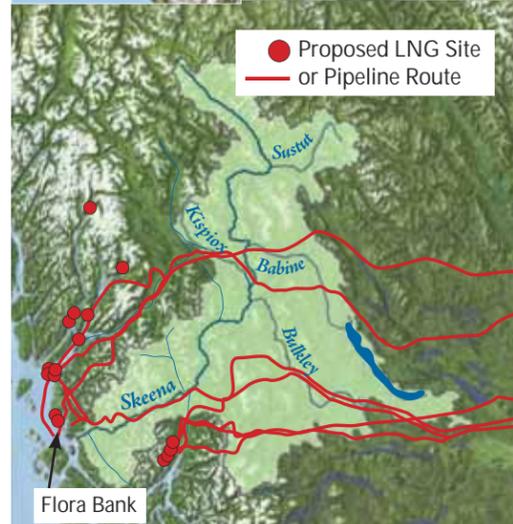
3-10 Million salmon and steelhead return to the Skeena every year

Over 80% of juvenile Skeena salmon use the area that would be impacted by Petronas’ proposed LNG facility

▶ Sixteen liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects are proposed on the Skeena watershed, including Petronas’ LNG facility that would be built over Flora Bank—one of the most sensitive salmon habitats in Canada with an estimated migration of 300 million juvenile sockeye salmon each year.



Ken Morrish, Fly Water Travel



PARTNER PROFILE: Greg Knox, SkeenaWild

For Greg Knox, the Skeena country’s free flowing salmon rivers and uplands studded with grizzlies were a shot of adrenaline when he arrived 20 years ago. “It literally made my heart skip a beat,” Knox says. He joined the Nisga’a Nation as a fisheries biologist in the region, then guided wildlife tours. He took on the role of executive director at SkeenaWild in 2007. The organization feeds on a fierce attachment to this place—some newly formed, some passed down through generations of First Nations people. “Even though we are astronomically overmatched in terms of money and political influence, we have something more powerful,” Knox says. “People still have strong connections to salmon, and if proposed development threatens their fish they are willing to stand up and fight.”

“Despite many threats, we have a long history in this watershed of stopping development that poses serious risks to salmon and steelhead. The Skeena presents us with a unique opportunity to show people and salmon can coexist in a meaningful way.”

— Greg Knox, Executive Director, SkeenaWild Conservation Trust



The Pebble Fight Continues

When the Pebble Limited Partnership proposed one of the largest open pit mines ever conceived at the headwaters of Alaska's Nushagak and Kvichak rivers in 2007, the project seemed unstoppable. There was both big money and significant political support for a mine that would threaten more than half of the world's supply of sockeye salmon and thousands of jobs.

What the Pebble Limited Partnership didn't count on was the strength and determination of Bristol Bay communities, Alaskans, and a broad coalition of partners and concerned citizens throughout the nation united to protect Bristol Bay.

Wild Salmon Center has acted as a key ally and resource for Alaskans throughout this struggle. We bolstered the scientific and economic argument against the project with a comprehensive report on potential impacts to salmon habitat and the fishing industry. WSC and our partners helped Bristol Bay villages achieve a 6 million-acre increase in fish habitat classification for state lands surrounding the Pebble deposit. And we drummed up public comments against the mine proposal as part of a broad Bristol Bay coalition. Over the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) three-year public review period, 1.5 million citizens spoke out in favor of protecting the Bristol Bay watershed. Last year, scientific evidence paired with public outcry led the EPA to initiate a Clean Water Act process to restrict mining and protect Bristol Bay.

But the fight is not over. Although Pebble Mine's major international investor has abandoned the project, the remaining partner Northern Dynasty has begun a costly legal battle intended to revive the mine. We will stand with Alaskans until Bristol Bay is permanently protected. The 52 million sockeye expected to return this summer to the spawning grounds of Bristol Bay remind us what's at stake.

Jason Ching



FEATURED PARTNER: Susitna River Coalition

Gaining Ground to Stop the Susitna Dam

From its glacial origins near Denali and the Alaska Range, the Susitna flows over 300 miles to Cook Inlet. It sustains five species of Pacific salmon—including Alaska's fourth largest run of Chinook—and its watershed is home to many of the state's iconic animals, including moose, brown and black bear and the 40,000-head Nelchina caribou herd.

The proposed Susitna mega-dam would threaten all this by flooding 40,000 acres of prime hunting and recreation wilderness near Denali National Park above the dam, and by threatening salmon rearing, migratory, and spawning habitat below the dam. Reaching 735 feet high, the Susitna dam would be the second tallest dam in the United States but would provide only a modest amount of power. The dam would cost \$5.6 billion to build, while jeopardizing the thousands of tourist and fishing jobs that the Susitna River currently supports.

The Susitna River Coalition—a group of local stakeholders ranging from small business owners and recreational guides to retired teachers—formed in 2011 to rally public support to stop the proposed Susitna dam. The coalition looked to WSC for campaign guidance and legal, scientific, and technical support.

To date, the coalition has garnered more than 15,000 supporters, and more and more Alaskans are questioning the value of the project. In December 2014, Governor Bill Walker took office and froze discretionary spending on all six proposed large infrastructure projects in the state, including the Susitna dam. With the future of the project uncertain, the Susitna River Coalition and WSC will remain vigilant until the dam is dead and the future of the Susitna River is secure.



The region supports a **\$200 million** recreation economy



PARTNER PROFILE: Mike Wood, Susitna River Coalition

Everybody knows and loves Copper River salmon. Mike Wood wants people to become infatuated with Susitna Chinook—to ensure the Susitna River's long term protection. The former outdoor instructor and current president of the Susitna River Coalition is opening a new commercial salmon fishing operation to harvest and sell Susitna fish. "If we can get people hooked on food from this place, whether it's caribou or fish, they'll be more motivated to protect it." He's had to learn on the job—including navigating an airdrop of freezers into a remote outpost on Cook Inlet to preserve captured fish.

But it's hard to bet against Wood, who built a homestead from scratch with his wife Molly on 50 acres upriver at Talkeetna and wears his heart on his sleeve. "I understand how people elsewhere fight and die for their home," he says. His infectious energy helped turn Alaska politicians and the public against the Susitna Dam. Odds are you'll soon be hearing more about the Susitna and its salmon.



Barbie Hall

“The dam is not in Alaska’s best interest financially speaking and it will imperil our salmon. In a time where dams are being torn down in hopes of renewing lost salmon runs, this project is utterly absurd.”

– Mike Wood (pictured with wife Molly), Susitna River Coalition

Proactive, Pro-Wild Strategy Takes Off on Washington Coast

While much of the Pacific Northwest's salmon and steelhead habitat has been compromised, Washington's Coast boasts some of the best remaining habitat in the Lower 48. The coast's temperate rainforests and free-flowing rivers support 50% of the non-endangered salmon and steelhead species in Washington.



Salmon strongholds like the Hoh, Queets, and Quillayute rivers have the greatest likelihood of providing strong runs of wild salmon and steelhead into the future. But even these strongholds face challenges. Washington's human population is projected to double in the next 50 years, and increased urban and industrial development will inevitably follow.

In recent decades, uniting different salmon interests around common goals on the Washington Coast has been a challenge. Conservation groups, tribes, governments, fishing interests, and others had their own plans—all well-intentioned, but all moving in slightly different directions. And without clear, broadly supported goals, funding wouldn't flow to protect the coast before development sets in.

Over the last eight years, Wild Salmon Center has been working with a diverse coalition on the Washington Coast to create the first unified salmon conservation plan for the region. Participants include the fishing and timber industries, tribes, state agencies, watershed councils, local governments, and conservation partners. Now 44 members strong, the Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership's balanced strategy for maintaining healthy salmon strongholds while supporting human needs—"Protect the Best, Restore the Rest"—has been adopted by the Governor's Salmon Recovery Office.

Drawing from a list of hundreds of conservation needs, the partnership has agreed on 32 priority projects—ranging from land acquisitions to fish barrier removals. And it recently made a bold ask: \$15 million in funding from the state to put its plan into action. That would be money well spent: proactive conservation—before the coast's species become endangered—is the most cost-effective approach to protecting salmon strongholds.

Only 9% of state
salmon funds go to the
Washington Coast —
which is home to half of
the state's strongest runs



Larry Workman

“It's a far better use of funds to prevent salmon from becoming endangered, than to try to recover fish once they are endangered.”

— Miles Batchelder, Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership

Safeguarding Forest Reserves in Oregon

The Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests cover 518,000 acres of temperate rainforest and free-flowing rivers along Oregon's North Coast between greater Portland and the Pacific Ocean. Six rivers here—the Trask, Wilson, Kilchis, Miami, Nehalem, and Salmonberry—host extraordinary runs of wild fall Chinook and winter steelhead, as well as spring Chinook, coho, and rainbow and sea-run cutthroat trout. The Kilchis and Miami are the most important strongholds for chum salmon south of the Columbia River.

Both the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests have long been targeted for increased logging by some county commissioners, two local timber companies, and their allies in the Oregon Legislature.

In response, Wild Salmon Center and allies formed the North Coast State Forest Coalition to push for protected areas in this ecologically sensitive region and to lobby for responsible forestry practices. WSC provides innovative forest management policy and communications expertise to the coalition which is backed by more than one hundred businesses and local organizations.

Wild Salmon Center spearheaded efforts to designate "High Value Conservation Areas" on the Tillamook and Clatsop forests—portions of forests where management focuses on wildlife, streams, and unique, threatened plants. The Oregon Board of Forestry approved the concept in 2013, designating 140,000 acres total.

We will be working this year on another important front: increasing forest buffers around streams and decreasing logging on steep slopes in North Coast forests. If we can secure rules on forest practices, WSC and our coalition will finally have the framework to protect healthy wild fish, clean water, and recreation opportunities on the North Coast.

▼ *The Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests (green) hold some of the best wild trout, salmon, and steelhead-bearing watersheds on the Oregon Coast.*



PARTNER PROFILE: Chris Smith, North Coast State Forest Coalition

Most Oregonians love their forests and the salmon streams that flow from them. But activating that abiding interest to sway policy is still a heavy lift, especially with the Tillamook and Clatsop state forests and the arcane policies that govern them. That's where Chris Smith comes in. The North Coast State Forest Coalition's program manager boils down all the planning dilemmas and timber sales into action alerts and news updates on these contentious lands at Portland's back door. He leads outings and contributes to hiking guide books to put people in the forests—all to make clear what's at stake in these salmon strongholds. "Many people don't know that these lands are state-owned, or that they are clearcut," Smith says. Thanks to Smith's steady campaigning, we have a muscular North Coast coalition of anglers, business owners, and conservation groups as the Tillamook and Clatsop update their forest plans this year. "When Oregonians are tuned into what is actually happening on the landscape," Smith says, "They don't lack for passion and involvement."

“ Conservation is crucial to western Oregon's economy and environment. Logging company interests alone cannot be the main driver determining the future of these forests and their rivers. ”

– Chris Smith, North Coast State Forest Coalition



518,000: acres in Tillamook & Clatsop State Forests



400,000 Oregonians rely on the region's watersheds for clean drinking water

Creating Sanctuaries for Wild Salmon and Steelhead on the Oregon Coast

Salmon hatcheries were first created by state and federal governments in the Pacific Northwest in the late 19th century in response to rapidly declining runs due largely to overfishing. Hatcheries were later expanded to compensate for lost habitat caused by dam construction and other development in the region.

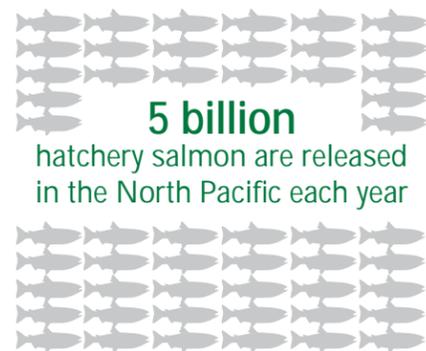
But science has since proved that hatchery fish pose a major threat to wild populations by competing for food and watering down genetic diversity through interbreeding. Genetic diversity is critical for wild populations to adapt to changing watershed and ocean conditions resulting from the projected impacts of global climate change, pollution, and development.

Every year, more than five billion young salmon and steelhead are released from hatcheries across the Pacific, making them the majority of salmon that swim in the North Pacific.

Wild Salmon Center believes hatcheries play an important role producing salmon for recreational and commercial harvest. But we should prevent the spread of hatcheries into rivers that support important runs of wild fish.

On the Oregon Coast, a series of rivers north of the Rogue River stretching up to the Columbia remain free of hatchery fish. As a result, the Oregon Coast represents the largest regional sanctuary in the lower 48 for wild fish, and we are working with partners to keep it that way. WSC supported the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in establishing “Wild Fish Emphasis Areas” on roughly half the watersheds between the Rogue River and Columbia. The state has committed to keep these watersheds “hatchery free” for 12 years.

Oregon’s acknowledgement that hatchery-reared fish pose a threat to wild populations represents a critical step in the state’s evolving management of wild fish. In the coastal watersheds where hatchery programs remain, Oregon is also working to reduce the impact of hatchery fish on wild stocks through a variety of approaches, including reducing hatchery releases in some watersheds and changing hatchery release locations and timing to avoid overlap with wild salmon migrations.



► 25 coastal watersheds are now “hatchery free” under Oregon’s new plan.

\$12.8 million: annual contribution of wild salmon and steelhead runs to Oregon coastal economies, according to a 2014 WSC report



“ Wild Fish Emphasis Areas on the Oregon Coast constitute the largest designated area managed solely for wild salmon and steelhead south of Canada.”

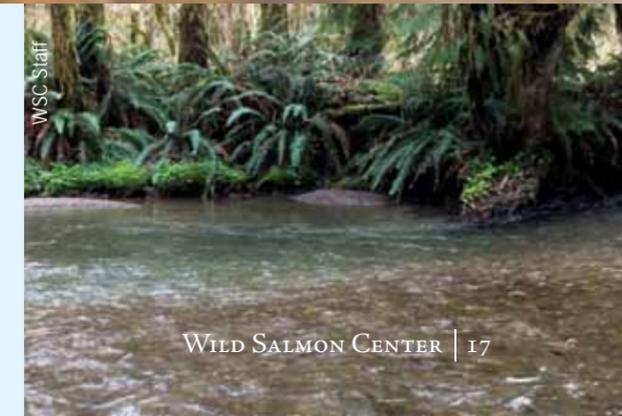
– Ed Bowles, Fish Division Chief, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife

Jim Yuscavitch



► Washington Coast Sanctuaries

In 2012, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife established the state’s first Wild Salmonid Management Zone on the Sol Duc, ending hatchery steelhead releases on this famed Washington Coast river. The Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Plan, adopted by the Governor’s Salmon Recovery Office, supports establishing additional sanctuaries on the coast. WSC is working with local tribes and the state to identify the next candidates, which could include the Hoh, Calawah (pictured right) and Clearwater.



WSC Staff

California Strongholds: Keeping Rivers Cold

Northern California Strongholds



There is little question that California salmon and steelhead are in trouble. A recent study in *Environmental Biology of Fishes* concluded that if fish population trends continue, 25 of the 32 distinct salmon, steelhead, and trout groups native to the Golden State may be extinct within the next century.

Since 2010, Wild Salmon Center has been working with public and private partners in California to identify the state's best wild salmon rivers—salmon strongholds—and support proactive, science-based efforts to protect them. The state of California has formally recognized strongholds throughout the state, including the Smith; Salmon/Mid Klamath; Mattole; South Fork Eel; Mill, Deer, and Butte Creeks (in the middle Sacramento); Big Sur; and Santa Clara river systems. Together, these watersheds represent less than 5% of the state's land area, but contain roughly 70% of its remaining salmon and steelhead diversity.

One of those strongholds, the South Fork of the Eel River—roughly 200 miles north of San Francisco, in southern Humboldt County—sustains one of the strongest wild coho salmon populations remaining in California (as well as abundant runs of Chinook and winter steelhead).

A challenge for coho in the South Fork is the lack of streamflow for rearing juveniles during dry summer months. While low summer streamflows are a natural occurrence, this stressor is being compounded by the cumulative effects of water diversions for agricultural and domestic uses. WSC has supported efforts on the South Fork to understand the minimum cold water flows necessary to sustain coho during summer months. Once those needs are understood and a standardized flow assessment developed, CalTrout, Trout Unlimited, and several local project partners hope to use the information to establish minimum streamflow objectives in the South Fork Eel, while working with private landowners to implement voluntary water conservation projects.

Maintaining cold water flows is a core strategy of the stronghold program in California, and partners there view the South Fork Eel as a pilot that may be replicable throughout the state's strongholds. According to Darren Mierau with CalTrout, "Our science-based approach developed in the South Fork Eel will provide a strong foundation for securing the health of other salmon strongholds as they face continued pressure from drought, climate change, and increasing water demands."

“ The salmon stronghold initiative has helped us jump start a program on the South Fork Eel that could have profound benefits to salmon and steelhead throughout California’s coastal watersheds. ”

– Curtis Knight, Executive Director, CalTrout





FEATURED PARTNER: Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation

In Tugur, Partners Conserve Key Reach on One of the World's Largest Pristine Rivers

The Tugur River flows through the rugged, remote northern area of the Khabarovsk region in the Russian Far East. It's one of Russia's most exceptional river systems—a watershed of rich biodiversity encompassing over 37,000 square miles and nearly 1,700 river miles. The basin is home to robust runs of chum and pink salmon and rare birds like Blakiston's fish owl and Steller's sea eagle, and is one of the enduring strongholds of the Siberian taimen, the largest member of the salmonid family, which grow to over 100 pounds in the Tugur. There are few vast, pristine watersheds like the Tugur left in the world.

While the Tugur Basin is still largely untouched by development, our local partner, the Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation (KWF) led by its chairman, Alexander Kulikov, has taken proactive steps to legally protect key parts of the watershed.

Kulikov built on three decades of experience in Khabarovsk by carefully gathering consensus for Tugur protection among hunters, indigenous groups, government representatives, and fishermen. His hard work paid off in 2014: the regional government created the Tugursky Nature Reserve, a 197,000-acre protected area that safeguards the most critical part of the watershed where the Tugur mainstem and Ulya join and feed into the Tugursky Bay and Sea of Okhotsk. Protected area status will preserve critical Siberian taimen habitat, sustain the region's commercial chum fishery, and provide an opportunity to demonstrate new low-impact sportfishing techniques on this popular angling river, including the use of single, barbless hooks.

Wild Salmon Center's work in the Tugur watershed began ten years ago with a scientific expedition and rapid assessment of the region. Since 2010, WSC has provided ongoing scientific and operational assistance to the Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation in support of formal protection for the Tugur. When combined with the Shantar Islands National Park and the neighboring Nimelen River, for which our partners are preparing a protected area assessment, this region offers one of our best remaining opportunities for conservation across an entire salmon-rich landscape.

Wild Salmon Center has been working to protect key salmon ecosystems and build local conservation capacity in the Western Pacific since the 1990s. WSC has selected strong regional partners and equipped them with the support they need to succeed—including surveys on wildlife and fish diversity, habitat quality, and conservation opportunities in 12 priority river basins in the region. In addition to the recent Tugursky Nature Reserve, this work has led to the creation of five other large-scale protected areas, which now total more than 2 million acres. And good news from the Kamchatka Peninsula: the Kol River, one of Russia's most abundant and diverse wild salmon rivers, moved one step closer to permanent protection with the regional governor officially including the river in the Volcanoes of Kamchatka regional park.

Guido Rahr



“The Tugursky Nature Reserve would not be possible without the understanding and support of the local communities, the scientific community that developed justifications for this protected area, and the Wild Salmon Center and their long-standing commitment to salmon conservation.”
— Alexander Kulikov, Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation

A Wild Salmon Territory for the Russian Far East

Sakhalin Island, which rests off the eastern coast of Russia, is the source of 20% of the Pacific's salmon. Copious pink and chum salmon runs make it the third most abundant salmon area in the world—driving a \$500 million fishing industry. However, many of Sakhalin's salmon bearing rivers are in decline due to overfishing and poaching as well as extractive industries. Hatcheries, first built by the Japanese over a century ago, have also hurt wild fish runs. Now, some fishing industry leaders are pushing for hatchery expansion to increase their harvest rates, without taking into consideration the impact on wild fish.

The bright spot is in northeast Sakhalin, where intact salmon habitat and wild runs remain and where fishermen and our conservation partners continue to protect wild fish abundance with the best approach available: fighting to keep rivers and their fish wild. This year, two of our close partners, Sakhalin Environment Watch and Smirnykh Fishermen's Association, introduced a new framework for wild fish protection by starting the Wild Salmon Territory initiative in northeast Sakhalin Island. The initiative centers on a commitment from commercial fishermen to combat poaching, eliminate in-river fishing, and keep the region "hatchery free"—a powerful statement from members of the same industry lobbying for hatcheries elsewhere in Sakhalin.

Participating fishermen will also establish limits for responsible pink and chum salmon catches in the region. And building on successful anti-poaching programs in Sakhalin's 165,000-acre Vostochny Reserve, the Wild Salmon Territory initiative will extend bans on damaging river-spanning fishing nets used by commercial fishermen and will continue upriver anti-poaching patrols across at least 13 rivers and nearly one million acres in the region.

The Smirnykh fishermen, led by longtime WSC partner Vladimir Smirnov, understand that the region's most precious renewable resource is salmon and that wild ecosystems are the best way to sustain the resource. Their Wild Salmon Territory plan redoubles their efforts to protect salmon habitat and wild fish runs.

649 anti-poaching raids were conducted in the Russian Far East in 2014

Russia accounts for **34%** of the Pacific's salmon catch



Sakhalin Environment Watch



Over 2,000 pounds of salmon roe (eggs) were seized from a poacher's camp on Sakhalin's Pilngi River where tens of thousands of salmon (deemed of less value) were left to rot on the river banks.

Sakhalin Environment Watch

Wild Salmon Territory (Proposed)



PARTNER PROFILE: Dmitry Lisitsyn, Sakhalin Environment Watch

How do Dmitry Lisitsyn and his organization keep notching conservation wins in the complex setting of the Russian Far East? By working deftly within the labyrinthine Russian bureaucracy and by building creative alliances at home and abroad. Lisitsyn, the former carpenter who earned the 2011 Goldman Environment Prize, and his wife, lawyer Natalia Lisitsynya, recently used local courts to win a case against a polluting gold mine on the salmon-rich Langeri River. Lisitsyn's group has also enlisted help from scientists from Wild Salmon Center and partners on environmental assessments in the region. And he has found common cause in recent years with local fishermen in securing protected areas and sanctuaries for wild fish. All this sustains him and his grassroots group. "Our partners, including our international ones, bring a much broader view of conservation," he says, "through an exchange of experiences, knowledge and information."

“ Working with foreign partners around the Pacific helps us to understand much better the value of the last wild populations of salmon, the last undisturbed ecosystems and the importance of their conservation. ”

– Dmitry Lisitsyn, Sakhalin Environment Watch, Goldman Environmental Prize Winner

FEATURED PARTNER: Sarufutsu Itou No Kai

Taimen Strongholds: Reversing the Decline of Japan and Russia's Ancient Giant

Taimen are the largest and oldest member of the salmon and trout family. Sakhalin taimen (*Hucho perryi*), an ocean-going member of the large-trout genus, can reach six feet in length and weigh over 100 pounds. Siberian taimen (*Hucho taimen*) can eclipse seven feet and 150 pounds. To put their size and ferocity in perspective, these taimen feed on adult salmon and have been dubbed the "river wolf" by local residents!

Siberian taimen once ranged from the Russian Far East westward throughout the former Soviet Union and Mongolia, but have since disappeared from parts of their original habitat. Remnant populations of Sakhalin taimen exist on the Japanese island of Hokkaido, Sakhalin Island, and the Khabarovsk region.

Since 2004, Wild Salmon Center has worked with key partners to study and protect taimen strongholds. Our work on Hokkaido has focused on the Sarufutsu watershed, one of the few undammed, remaining salmon rivers left in Japan; the river offers critical spawning and rearing habitat for taimen—known locally as "itou." We helped local partners protect over 6,500 acres of the watershed as the Sarufutsu Environmental Conservation Forest.

This year marked the conclusion of a two-year tracking study to estimate taimen populations with the National Institute of Environmental Studies, Hokkaido University, and Itou no Kai, a local conservation group. Using an underwater acoustic camera to record individual spawning pairs, extrapolations showed that the Sarufutsu supports 1,000 to 1,250 adults. The study also found that sportfishing seems to catch and release at least 50% of the population. New regulations, like the use of barbless hooks and restricting the season during spawning, could offer new levels of protection.

To the north, in Russia's Khabarovsk region, a three-year monitoring program on the Koppi River Protected Area with our partners at Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation also suggested a need to limit the impact of recreational angling. The Koppi Watershed Council, supported by KWF's chairman Alexander Kulikov, is successfully uniting the commercial and recreational fishing communities, hunters with local concessions, and the Orochi indigenous group around watershed protection and sustainable fishing to protect taimen on the river. And with continuing efforts to protect the Nimelen and Tugur basins (see page 20), Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation is conserving the Siberian taimen's best stronghold.

Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation



Siberian Taimen

Clemens Ratschan

“ The research we've been able to accomplish with the Wild Salmon Center provides new ammunition for additional protections for these majestic fish. ”

– Sergei Zolotukin, Fish Biologist, Khabarovsk Division TIRNO

Wild Salmon Center Launches Ocean Outcomes to Increase Supply of Sustainable Seafood

Since 2004, Wild Salmon Center has worked with partners in the Russian Far East to improve fishery management and assist commercial fishermen in protecting their fisheries. A key element of this work is the Salmon Fishery Improvement Project (FIP) Partnership, a collaborative industry-based initiative of leading seafood companies whose goal is to increase the volume of sustainable or improving wild capture salmon. High Liner Foods, Gorton's, Nestlé, The Fishin' Company, and Albion Fisheries have all joined the Partnership. Fishery Improvement Projects address serious challenges including overfishing, poaching, bycatch and hatchery impacts. Today, over 50% of salmon fisheries on Russia's Kamchatka Peninsula are participating in Fisheries Improvement Projects or third party sustainability certifications. Altogether, FIP's have generated more than 70,000 tons of third-party certified or FIP salmon—salmon that potentially brings a higher price to fisherman thanks to its sustainability.

To build on the success of the Salmon FIP Partnership and to accelerate the adoption of market-based improvement initiatives, Wild Salmon Center combined key elements of both its Sustainable Fisheries Program and the State of the Salmon Program to establish Ocean Outcomes (O2) as an independent, global fishery improvement organization in 2014.

O2 works hand-in-hand with commercial fisheries to help them become more sustainable. Initial efforts will focus on Russia and Japan, regions with significant fisheries that have strong opportunities for improvement. The added capacity that O2 brings to sustainable fisheries management in the Western Pacific will help local fishermen meet sustainable sourcing requirements of international seafood buyers. As strategic partners, WSC and O2 are implementing complementary activities to protect the long-term health of globally important salmon fisheries, particularly in Russia.

“ The future of wild fish depends in large part on conservation-minded commercial fishermen and local communities. O2 allows us to take the successful improvement model that we've developed for salmon fisheries and extend it to other wild fisheries. ”

– Guido Rahr, President of Wild Salmon Center

WSC Staff

Partners

Over the past year, we have continued to share resources and personnel with the following organizations, in order to further our common conservation goals.

United States

- Alaska Center for the Environment
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- American Rivers
- Association of Northwest Steelheaders
- Bristol Bay Heritage Land Trust
- Bristol Bay Native Association
- Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association
- Bristol Bay United
- California Department of Fish and Wildlife
- California Trout
- Chase Community Council
- Clallam County, Washington
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs
- Ecotrust
- Elk River Land Trust
- The Freshwater Trust
- Friends of Elk River
- Grays Harbor County/Chehalis Basin Lead Entity
- Hoh River Trust
- Illinois Valley Soil & Water Conservation District
- Illinois Valley Watershed Council
- Long Live the Kings
- Lower Nehalem Watershed Council
- Monterey Bay Aquarium
- MRAG Americas
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation
- National Marine Fisheries Service
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- Native Fish Society
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- The Nature Conservancy
- North Coast Land Conservancy
- North Olympic Land Trust
- North Pacific Coast Lead Entity
- Northwest Guides & Anglers Association
- Northwest Sportfishing Industry Association
- Nunamta Aulukestai
- Ocean Outcomes
- Oregon Conservation Network

With partners Trout Unlimited (TU) on Washington's **Calawah River**; Left to right: Rob Masonis (TU), Sara LaBorde (WSC), Warren Colyer (TU), Devona Ensmenger (WSC), and John McMillan (TU)



Salmon conservation and industry advocates from the Northwest and Alaska at the **Rally for Bristol Bay** in Seattle's Fishermen's Terminal

- Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Oregon Environmental Council
- Oregon League of Conservation Voters
- Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board
- Pacific County/Willapa Basin Lead Entity
- Pacific Rivers Council
- Partnership for Umpqua Rivers
- Pew Charitable Trusts
- Quileute Tribe
- Quinault Indian Nation
- Quinault Nation Lead Entity
- Sierra Club
- Siuslaw Institute
- Siuslaw Watershed Council
- Susitna River Coalition
- Talkeetna Community Council
- TerrainWorks
- Tillamook County, Oregon
- Tillamook Estuaries Partnership
- Trout Unlimited
- United Tribes of Bristol Bay
- University of Washington Olympic Natural Resource Center
- Upper Nehalem Watershed Council
- USDA Forest Service
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Foundation
- Washington Coast Sustainable Salmon Partnership
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington Forest Law Center
- Washington Governor's Salmon Recovery Office
- Western Rivers Conservancy
- Wild Rivers Coast Alliance
- Wild Rivers Land Trust

Perry Broderick (Ocean Outcomes) in Bristol Bay



Russia

- Aniva Watershed Council
- Boomerang NGO, Sakhalin
- Elizovo Watershed Council
- Kamchatka Protected Areas Association

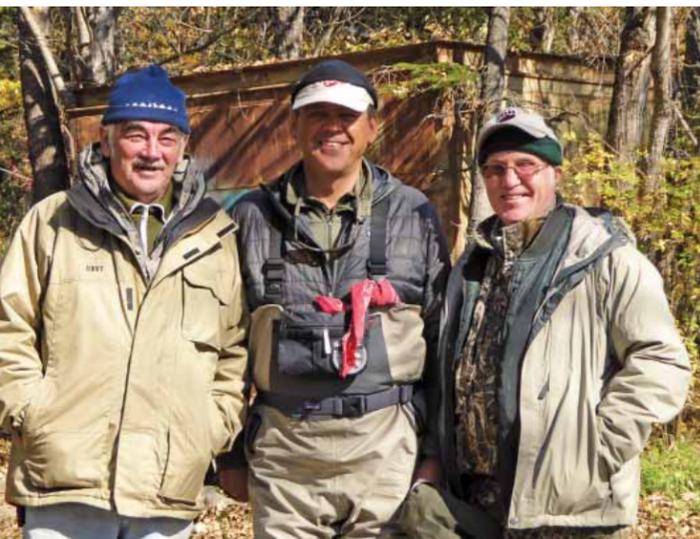
Vladimir Smirnov (Smirnykh Fishermen's Association)



Bob Van Dyk (WSC) with WSC President Guido Rahr and Bob Rees (Northwest Steelheaders) in Oregon's Tillamook Forest

- Kamchatka Regional Administration
- Kamchatka State Technical University
- KamchatNIRO
- Khabarovsk Division TINRO
- Khabarovsk Regional Administration
- Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation
- Kol River Salmon Refuge
- Koppi Watershed Council
- Kronotsky State Nature Reserve
- Moscow State University, Ichthyology Department
- Nogliki Watershed Council
- Okha Watershed Council
- Plavnik Co.
- Poronaisk Watershed Council
- Russian Academy of Sciences Institute of General Genetics and Institute of Problems of Evolutionary Ecology
- Russian American Pacific Partnership (RAPP)
- Russian Fly Fishing Magazine "Nakhlyst"
- Russian Salmon Fund
- Sakhalin Environment Watch
- Sakhalin Regional Administration
- Sakhalin Regional Fisheries Association
- Sakhalinrybvod
- SakhNIRO
- "Saving Salmon Together" Regional NGO, Kamchatka
- Smirnykh Fisherman's Association
- Smirnykh Watershed Council
- Ulegorsk Watershed Council
- Ust-Bolsheretsk Watershed Council

Fish biologist Sergei Zolotukhin, Mariusz Wroblewski (WSC), and Alexander Kulikov (Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation) on Russia's Koppi River



International

- Global Sustainable Seafood Initiative
- Intertek Fisheries Certification
- IUCN, Species Survival Commission
- Marine Stewardship Council
- North Pacific Anadromous Fish Commission
- Pacific Salmon Commission
- Sustainable Fisheries Partnership
- World Wildlife Fund for Nature

WSC supported four regional festivals in the Russian Far East in 2014, including Kamchatka's **Fish First Festival**, the **Sportfishing Championship** on Sakhalin Island, and the **Koppi Indigenous Festival** in Khabarovsk



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▲ Travis Campbell of Sage Manufacturing (center) with family members and fishing guides near Bristol Bay, Alaska

CORPORATE SPOTLIGHT Sage Manufacturing

Sage Manufacturing was founded in 1980 by legendary rod designer Don Green with one idea in mind: to build the world's finest performance fly rods and reels. Using world-class materials and years of experience gained both on the water and in the lab, Sage revolutionized the fly fishing world. Since then the company has grown from six to 175 employees, but its commitment to craftsmanship remains unchanged.

Also integral to Sage's mission is its dedication to conserving healthy water systems and strong fish populations. Since 2006, the company has supported the Wild Salmon Center through gear donations and event sponsorships, in the hopes of achieving a common goal of ensuring that intact fisheries continue to thrive. WSC's commitment to safeguarding salmon and steelhead ecosystems is particularly important to the staff at Sage. "These species represent our 'backyard' fishing opportunities," says Travis Campbell, the Bainbridge Island, WA-based CEO of Sage Manufacturing. "We are especially passionate about protecting these anadromous fish."

In addition to conserving their most beloved waters and landscapes, Sage considers its partnership with WSC to be an opportunity to show customers that they have a tangible commitment to the future of the sport. "We all share this passion for fishing, and an interest in providing similar, if not better, fly fishing opportunities for future generations," says Campbell. "We can only achieve this by protecting our healthy rivers today." Learn more at sageflyfish.com.

▼ Andrew Beldin and Desiree Hall at the WSC 2014 Dinner & Auction





▲ **2014 Dinner & Auction.** The Wild Salmon Center welcomed special guest **Ted Turner** to its *Voices of the Pacific Dinner and Auction* to celebrate wild salmon and their champions across the Pacific Rim. Over 250 guests joined Wild Salmon Center staff, board, and partners at Seattle's Fairmont Olympic Hotel to learn about the current challenges and opportunities to conserve wild salmon populations. Together, we raised over \$300,000 for WSC and our partners' conservation work. Thank you to all our guests and sponsors for making this event such a success! (Also pictured: WSC's Kim Kosa and President Guido Rahr. Photos by Barbie Hull Photography.)

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▼ **Ted Turner** interviewed by author **John Vaillant**



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Front cover: migrating coho, Oregon (Tom & Pat Leeson);
 Back cover: Bristol Bay, Alaska (Ryan Peterson).
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► WSC Staff **Emily Anderson, Dave Finkel, Sara LaBorde** and **Kim Kosa** exploring Alaska's watersheds

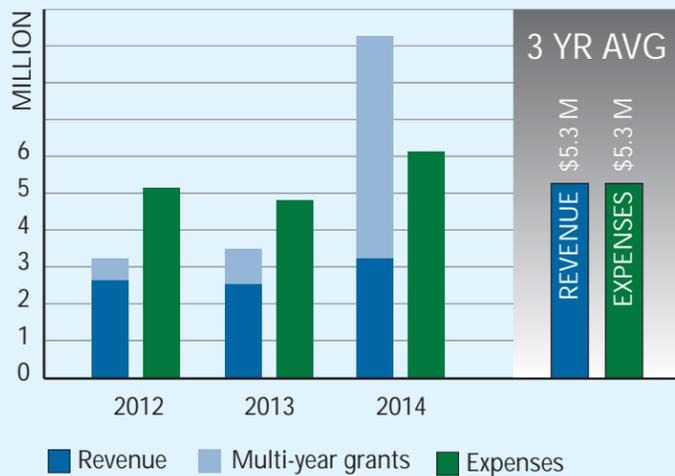
▲ WSC Board Member **Leah Hair** at the 2014 Dinner & Auction



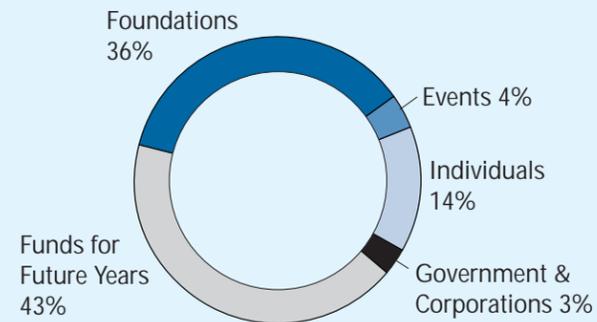
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For the fiscal year ending December 31, 2014

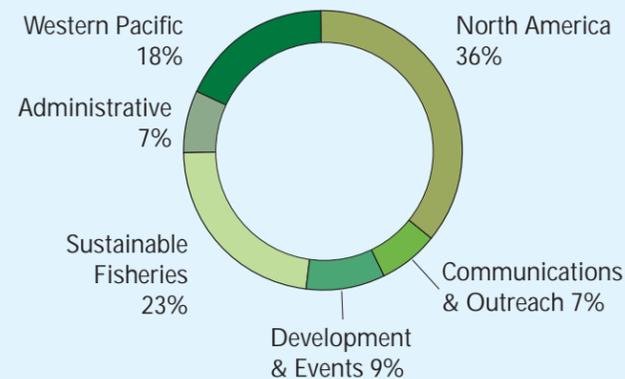
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WILD SALMON CENTER

The mission of Wild Salmon Center is to promote the conservation and sustainable use of wild salmon ecosystems across the Pacific Rim.



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