



WILD SALMON CENTER

Annual Report 2018: Keystone of the Pacific

Salmon are Key

Looking down from space, as the Apollo astronauts did some 50 years ago this summer, you can clearly see the contours of the North Pacific Rim; the rugged shorelines and volcanoes of the Russian Far East, the snow-covered Kamchatka Peninsula, Alaska’s multitude of mountains and the rich green coastal rainforests of British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon.

Beneath the clouds and floating in the cold water are millions of miles of phytoplankton, churning out the life-giving oxygen that protects our planet. Under the mats of plankton are the salmon, hunting small euphasiid shrimp, squid, and schools of baitfish. In one of the largest and most miraculous migrations known, they stream like clockwork each year towards the coasts, bringing billions of tons a year of marine nutrients far up the rivers and streams that flow into the North Pacific.

If the earth is a living, breathing organism, and the oceans are its lungs, then the salmon are the blood cells that bring nutrients from the ocean to feed the food webs across millions of miles of streams and rivers from California to Japan. We are all inextricably linked to that food web stretching across the North Pacific. And like an organism, we must build a local “immune response” to defend these river systems from internal or external threats.

The mission of the Wild Salmon Center is to strengthen this immune response in each of the Pacific’s salmon strongholds. We do this by making a multidecadal commitment to conservation in each watershed, and then building a defensive perimeter, like layers of armor against future threats. These can be new parks or forest reserves, riparian buffers, fish management and conservation reforms, and most importantly, strong local conservation organizations.

Whether it’s a proposal to de-water a coastal salmon stream in the Tillamook rainforest, or an open pit gold mine in Alaska, the threats will continue to come. We must build the strength and resilience to be prepared to fight back—for as long as it takes.

In the following pages, you’ll read more about the role salmon play as the "keystone" of the North Pacific. And you’ll learn about WSC’s integral role in the region, as a catalyst for protecting the great river systems built on salmon. As always, it’s your support that enables us to keep this miraculous, pulsating region alive and well in a century of change.

Guido Rahr
President and Chief Executive



Guido Rahr

Dean River, BRITISH COLUMBIA



We must build a local “immune response” to defend stronghold river systems from internal and external threats.



The Keystone of the North Pacific

Like the central stone that holds together an arch, a keystone species holds together an ecosystem. That's the role of wild salmon in the North Pacific. With healthy salmon runs, our oceans and coastal river systems flourish. Fishing families of all sorts thrive. This year's report showcases how conserving wild salmon and their home habitat also supports a range of communities, from iconic populations of whales and bears, to core elements of life, including healthy food and clean drinking water.

Wild Salmon Center works alongside local partners in key watersheds around the North Pacific to protect all these things and more. Proactively safeguarding salmon rivers and supporting local leadership are the most effective strategies to keep those places intact for the next generation and beyond. We are focused on protecting salmon because we know it is one key to conserving a habitable future on this planet.

Key milestones to date, accomplished by WSC and our partners:

2.7 million acres of new Protected Areas in Russia.

40 Russian rivers managed exclusively for wild fish.

2 dams on major salmon rivers stopped or shelved.

Expanded **streamside buffers across 2,500 river miles** in Western Oregon.

31 rivers managed exclusively for wild fish populations in North America.

13 organizations launched and direct support for 12 more.



Key accomplishments with partners this year:

- 1) Supported legislation to stop the federal permitting process for Pebble Mine in [Bristol Bay, Alaska](#) (pg. 8).
- 2) New protections for the [Skeena River](#) estuary (pg. 10).
- 3) Launched [Coastal Rivers Conservancy](#) in BC (pg. 10); joined a new [Klamath Chinook partnership](#) (pg. 18).
- 4) Secured over \$14 million in state funding for culvert removal and restoration in [Washington](#) (pg. 12).
- 5) Began targeted, on-the-ground restoration as part of \$5 million [Oregon Coast Coho Partnership](#) (pg. 14).
- 6) Helped establish Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Sanctuary on Oregon's [North Umpqua River](#) (pg. 16).
- 7) Working with Russian partners to expand protections on the [on the Koppi, Tugur and Uda rivers](#) (pg. 20).

Advancing Conservation Across the Pacific

Wild Salmon Center leads partner-based protection and restoration in more than 20 of the hemisphere's most important wild salmon and steelhead rivers.

Working with Alaskans and Congress to protect the Pacific's greatest salmon stronghold — and a brown bear hotspot.

Taking Pebble Off the Fast-Track

Bristol Bay is the crown jewel of salmon strongholds left in the North Pacific. But the Pebble Mine, planned at the headwaters of the Nushagak and Kvichak, two of the region's most important rivers, is on a fast-track toward securing a key federal permit. While Wild Salmon Center and our Alaska partners battle to stop it, federal political appointees and the Army Corps of Engineers are working hard to pave the way for what would eventually be a massive and toxic open pit mine.

First, Pebble failed to provide the necessary information to support a credible scientific review of the project. Then the Army Corps released a draft environmental impact statement that vastly underestimates the risks of the Pebble Mine project, including the loss of more than 80 miles of salmon streams, and risks from the leaks of toxic waste that will have to be managed in perpetuity. The Army Corps accepted an untested plan to treat tens of billions of gallons of toxic wastewater every year and dump it into Bristol Bay salmon streams—forever.

Experts at other federal agencies have decried the review, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service saying it was “so inadequate that it precludes meaningful analysis.”

For years, WSC has helped galvanize opposition to the mine. In 2018, we **helped rally more than 100,000 Alaskans** behind a ballot measure that would have provided stronger development standards in places like Bristol Bay. The measure failed, but these Alaskans are now speaking out more loudly than ever by calling on Senator Lisa Murkowski and other high-ranking Alaska decision-makers to stop the mine and the questionable permitting process. Rallies across the state, including a 900-strong gathering in Anchorage (*pictured below*), represent the solid majority of Alaskans who are against the mine. After Alaska Native tribes joined with fishermen and conservation groups nationwide (including WSC) to successfully lobby the U.S. House in June 2019 for **an amendment to pause the permitting**

process, the pressure mounts on the U.S. Senate to force Pebble and the Army Corps to produce a credible environmental review. If done correctly, it will demonstrate, once again, that Bristol Bay is no place for Pebble Mine.



KEYSTONE SPOTLIGHT: Brown Bears

Every summer, sockeye salmon paint the creeks, lakes, and rivers of Bristol Bay crimson. But it's not simply the beautiful end to a poetic life journey: these sockeye are in a race to spawn, and their archnemesis at this life stage is a one-ton, smelly beast with the deft paws of a house cat and jaws like a massive can opener: *Ursus arctos*. Over hundreds of thousands of years, sockeye have evolved for reproductive success with brown bears in mind. The fish headed for deeper lake spawning grounds develop bulbous humped backs to win over females in that competitive environment. But those who head for smaller creeks stay sharper and sleeker “like a bullet” to avoid bears, says Daniel Schindler, one of the preeminent ecologists working in Bristol Bay.

The bears get their fish regardless. Recent science shows that in their pursuit of sockeye, bears move from creek to creek, tracking successive runs of salmon that are geared to spawn in ever warmer water over the course of the summer. This “portfolio” of salmon runs over two and half months is what transforms a relatively barren area of the sub-Arctic tundra the size of Wisconsin into a global hotspot for large mammals like brown bears. Bears in coastal Alaska eat up to two tons of salmon a season. And the bear density is up to 20 times higher in salmon regions than in interior regions of Alaska. Bears in the watersheds around Bristol Bay are part of the largest concentration of brown bears in the world. The intricate relationship of bears and salmon in Bristol Bay is a prime demonstration of salmon's place as the keystone of the North Pacific.



Protecting juvenile salmon nurseries benefits the entire Skeena salmon economy.

Protections for the Skeena Estuary

In 2017, Malaysian oil and gas giant Petronas abandoned plans for a large \$12 billion liquefied natural gas processing and shipping facility at Lelu Island and Flora Bank, which sit at the mouth of the Skeena River and hold its most important salmon and steelhead nurseries. That followed an extensive public campaign and legal challenges against the development from local First Nations and Wild Salmon Center partner, Skeena Wild.

Now, the **Prince Rupert port authority has recognized the ecological importance of this area and declared much of the proposed project area off limits to development**—including Flora Bank and nearby shallow water areas. While other surrounding sand banks and forested Lelu Island are still open to development, the regional port authority’s move marks a positive step toward proactive protection in an area that provides rearing habitat for more than 50 different populations of juvenile Skeena River salmon. With the port authority saying it’s open to public input to guide responsible development in the future, the stage is set for comprehensive long-term planning discussions to protect the estuary. “We recognize that development can and should happen around Prince Rupert, but it should not be done over the top of critical salmon habitats,” says Greg Knox, Skeena Wild’s executive director. “Comprehensive planning with indigenous communities and the port authority will sort out where and how responsible development should take place.”

New Conservation Voice for the Dean

Wild Salmon Center and a small group of concerned fishing communities have **helped establish a new organization, Coastal Rivers Conservancy**, to focus on the long-term protection of wild salmon and steelhead ecosystems in BC’s inner central coast. That area includes the world-renowned Dean River and nearby rivers and marine channels including Fisher, Bentick, and Burke.

The organization will collaborate with local First Nations, NGOs, government agencies, and shareholders to address development, habitat, and fisheries issues. And with support from The Stronghold Fund (Wild Salmon Center’s impact fund), the organization will work closely with WSC Science Director Matt Sloat on its first order of business: building up-to-date knowledge of salmon and steelhead stocks in the region. From there, CRC will work to implement protections that lead to long-term safeguards of the region’s wild salmon and steelhead runs. Longtime Dean River guide Scott Carlson will be the Executive Director of CRC.



KEYSTONE SPOTLIGHT: The Salmon Economy

For thousands of years at the Babine Fence — large wooden fish weirs on the Babine River 350 miles from sea — First Nations fishermen annually harvested up to three-quarters of a million fish.

But in 1905, colonial officials forced the Lake Babine Nation to dismantle the weirs in favor of a new commercial fleet and canneries. More than 80 canneries sprouted in northern BC. When the cannery economy waned mid-century, the Chinook and steelhead sportfishing industry rose, with high-end lodges on Skeena tributaries fueling a \$50 million economy in recent years.

Tribal fisheries continue to evolve. In 2011, the Lake Babine Nation and SkeenaWild teamed up to restart fishing at the Babine Fence, now made of steel. In a good year, fishermen haul hundreds of thousands of pounds of salmon to market, employing 75 people— a boost to the local economy of the upper Skeena.



We need to recover the diversity and abundance of wild Chinook populations that once reliably fed whales, people, and river ecosystems.



Amy Stock

Keeping Chinook Rivers Whole

Washington's best collection of salmon and steelhead rivers flow from the Olympic Peninsula. They are home to half of the state's strongest salmon runs and are best positioned to weather climate change.

But these rivers still need plenty of restoration and further protection, after a century-and-a-half of heavy logging and road building. We're working on many fronts to ensure that strongholds continue to provide great salmon habitat for generations.

Our Cold Water Connection campaign is **opening up 150 miles of streams previously blocked by outdated road culverts**. These mini-dams on watersheds like the Hoh and Calawah prevent salmon from using cold reaches to ride out hot summer months. On the Hoh, fish have limited or no access to 42 percent of tributary streams.

Working with our allies at Coast Salmon Partnership, we helped secure over **\$14 million** in state funding for culvert removal and restoration. This includes a unique project with the Quileute Tribe and four federal agencies to restore juvenile salmon habitat and spawning beds to the lower Quillayute River, while stabilizing the riverbank around the community of La Push.

We are also helping to organize the scientific case and rallying local communities against a proposed dam on the Chehalis River. Both Quillayute and Chehalis Chinook runs serve as a key food source for struggling Southern Resident orcas, which shows how important our work is to Washington ecosystems.

Advocating for Stronger Steelhead Returns

If we are to have viable runs of wild steelhead on the Olympic Peninsula in the future, research shows that we need to allow more of these fish to escape fisheries and reach spawning grounds. WSC Science Director Matt Sloat and partners **reconstructed historic runs in the region over the last 70 years** and found a steep decline in adult wild steelhead on the peninsula's key rivers, such as the Hoh, which has lost 34 percent of its abundance in the last four decades. In the future, we need to allow for a more genetically diverse group of steelhead to escape fisheries and spawn. Safety lies in both healthy fish numbers and a diversity of survival strategies—from different migration seasons to numbers of years spent at sea. By adopting science-based goals for diversity and abundance, we will increase the resiliency and overall health of these legendary runs in the face of climate change.



Patrick Clayton

KEYSTONE SPOTLIGHT: Killer Whales

At the turn of the 20th century, catching a Chinook salmon over 100 pounds was still possible. But a vicious cycle of overfishing has taken these large beasts out of the water for good.

The decline of Chinook along the Pacific Northwest coast has led to seasonal shortages of salmon prey for resident killer whales, also called orcas.

In the late 1990s there were about 100 orcas. Now there are 74. Just two dozen healthy mothers remain to reproduce and more and more of the group is showing peanut-shaped heads that are the telltale sign of starvation.

We need to recover the diversity and abundance of wild Chinook populations that once reliably fed whales, people, and river ecosystems. We can do this by more selectively harvesting fish close to their home rivers, and by giving Chinook more healthy spawning rivers to come home to, from the Olympic Peninsula to the upper Columbia.

As we help those and other salmon rivers return to health and reverse the tide of salmon and orca decline, communities across Washington stand to benefit.

We are working to restore coho and other salmon runs on the Oregon Coast — that means bringing beavers back.

Coho Partnership Restoring Coastal Strongholds

The rivers that flow from the temperate rainforest of western Oregon into the Pacific Ocean contain some of the strongest remaining populations of wild salmon and steelhead remaining south of Canada. Over a century of resource extraction has heavily impacted coastal watersheds, however, reducing salmon habitat and leading to sharp declines in critical summer flows.

To rebuild impaired habitat, Wild Salmon Center's Mark Trenholm has developed a new science-based approach to choose the highest value restoration projects on the coast. WSC co-founded the Coast Coho Partnership, a team of public agencies and coastal partners committed to accelerating strategic restoration. The program is part of a broader effort we are undertaking to protect and restore coastal watersheds and recover Oregon Coast coho—an indicator species for ecosystem health across the region.

After completing watershed restoration plans, partners in the Nehalem, Elk, and Siuslaw rivers are now restoring large wood to streams, reconnecting tidal wetlands, removing failed culverts, and replanting native vegetation. We are also facilitating a second round of plans in the Coos Bay, Siletz, and upper Rogue watersheds, and project implementation in these areas will begin in 2020. To date, Wild Salmon Center has generated more than \$5 million for local partners' restoration.

One of the most exciting projects involves restoring beaver populations in the upper Nehalem River. Wild Salmon Center, NOAA Restoration Center, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife are supporting the Upper Nehalem Watershed Council's program to install physical footholds called "beaver dam analogues" in critical tributaries. These habitat starter kits include wood pilings driven into stream beds, and woven with willow and other favorite beaver forage. The goal is for beavers to move into these areas and build dams around the pilings. These dams will pond water, which juvenile coho rely on to escape high storm flows in winter and access cool water in summer.

Similar efforts have shown high returns for salmon and steelhead in other regions. In a tributary of Oregon's John Day River, a series of assisted beaver ponds delivered a 175 percent increase in juvenile steelhead. With more than two dozen of these structures installed in the upper Nehalem, we expect that beaver and salmon populations will grow together, stabilizing the Nehalem coho runs for decades to come.



David Herasimtschuk

KEYSTONE SPOTLIGHT: Beaver

We increasingly understand that the health of coastal rainforest rivers is tied to both coho and another keystone species: the beaver.

As one of nature's engineers, beavers build ponds that maintain a flow of cold, clean, slow moving water in a river system—ponds that provide homes for juvenile salmon and small invertebrate critters at the base of the food chain.

But the beaver was trapped to near extinction in the Pacific Northwest fur trade in the 1800s. Since then, logging, agriculture, and other land uses on the Oregon coast have led to straightened, incised, and simplified stream channels, which have kept both beaver and threatened coho from regaining a foothold in their former range.

By helping beavers return to the landscape, we are helping restore river function and bring coho back to coastal streams.

500,000 people get their drinking water from the Tillamook and Clatsop State Forests, which stretch across 500,000 acres of temperate rainforest between Portland and the Pacific.

Oregon Needs to Overhaul Forest Protections

To protect Oregon's coastal rivers, we need to focus on improving forest practices, which are threatening prized strongholds from Tillamook Bay to the Rogue River. Despite recent improvements to streamside buffers on private lands, Oregon still requires just half the width of no-cut forested buffers around streams that Washington does. What's more, a recent state report found that Oregon is not adequately tracking how timber companies comply with even this modest rule.

The science is clear: heavy logging around streams raises water temperatures while reducing the number of trees that fall into streams and provide good salmon habitat. Thinner buffers filter less sediment during storms. And Oregon's minimal rules on steep slopes mean greater risk of landslides that smother salmon eggs. The federal government has called out Oregon's forest practices as hazardous to salmon. Wild Salmon Center is working with the Oregon Legislature, the Oregon governor's office, and the state Board of Forestry to improve stream buffers in Southern Oregon, designate important coho streams for protection across Oregon, and secure long-term protection of key salmon habitat on state forests. The future of Oregon's coastal salmon runs depends on modernizing logging rules.

Moore Sanctuary Established

It's official! In late February, **the Frank and Jeanne Moore Wild Steelhead Sanctuary was created on the North Umpqua** as part of a large, bipartisan public lands bill. The sanctuary, which WSC initiated and campaigned for, strengthens wild steelhead conservation on approximately 100,000 acres of public lands around Steamboat Creek on Oregon's North Umpqua River, the most important summer steelhead spawning area in the Pacific Northwest. It honors two inspirational conservationists and American heroes. After Frank served in World War II, Frank and Jeanne ran the legendary Steamboat Inn on the banks of the North Umpqua. Frank served on the State of Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission and in 2010 was inducted into the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame. Jeanne is a self-taught botanical expert who has spent her life identifying the myriad native plant species in the Steamboat Creek watershed. "This is a gift for future generations," Congressman Peter DeFazio said at a celebration in March. "I can't think of two people who are more deserving."



Ken Morrish

KEYSTONE SPOTLIGHT: Drinking Water

On the North Coast of Oregon, both communities and salmon depend on clean, cold water and responsible logging practices to protect that water.

The Nehalem River, which loops 118 miles from source to sea, provides drinking water for Vernonia (population 2,200), and Timber (population 131), and hosts important runs of winter steelhead and fall Chinook, along with coho and chum. But on the Nehalem and similar rivers on the North Coast, Oregon allows logging too close to streams and along steep slopes. The resulting warmer temperatures and dirty streams ruin water quality for people and fish.

Coastal communities are having to make million-dollar upgrades to water filtration systems after heavy logging right in the watersheds that provide their tap water. Two more communities—Netarts and Oceanside—watched the watersheds that supply their drinking water logged this year.

It's time for a change: Oregon needs to update its forest practices to protect fish and communities.

If Chinook are able to recolonize lost spawning regions of the Klamath, it will provide a major boost to fisheries and to the local people who depend on those salmon.



WSC Joins the New Klamath Chinook Partnership

People in the Pacific Northwest love spring Chinook. All communities of fishers prize them for their fatty flavor. Tribal communities celebrate them with First Salmon rituals—marking the annual renewal of life-giving salmon runs. And because spring Chinook spawn and die in headwater streams, these fish deliver important nutrients high up in river systems.

Over the last several years, Wild Salmon Center has been closely involved with research that shows how spring Chinook are genetically unique from their fall run cousins. This has major implications for places like the Klamath River, where greater Chinook salmon diversity has been severely eroded by habitat destruction, disease, and drought. "Springers" have suffered disproportionately because they spend more time in freshwater and are more reliant on headwater habitats blocked by major dams. Various Klamaths runs have dwindled to a few hundred fish.

How should spring Chinook be restored in the Klamath as four major dams are removed starting in 2021? Because genetically distinct spring Chinook can't simply re-emerge from fall populations, we need to look at novel approaches to restoring lost spring runs to the upper Klamath after the dams fall. It's not as simple as tearing out the dams and allowing Chinook to swim upriver.

WSC Science Director Matt Sloat is working with a newly formed team of tribal, agency, and academic scientists to **develop strategies to help Chinook recolonize the upper Klamath, which would benefit the entire region.**



Mihael Blikshteyn

KEYSTONE SPOTLIGHT: Indigenous Communities

For centuries, Northern California's Karuk and Yurok tribes have fed themselves and built their cultures around the abundance of salmon—particularly Chinook—in the Klamath River Basin. The remarkable diversity of Chinook runs ran near-continuously from March to November. Prior to European contact, consumption of salmon was estimated at up to 450 pounds per person per year, or more than one pound per person per day.

But as a result of habitat loss, tribal salmon fisheries and their communities have struggled in recent years, with ailing spring and fall Chinook returns impacting local economies and increasing food insecurity. In 2017, the Karuk limited their catch to 200 salmon, well below the amount needed to feed 4,800 members or hold traditional ceremonies. The Yurok closed their fall subsistence gillnet fishery in 2017. And the tribe ended up buying Alaska salmon for its annual August salmon festival, the first time in memory.

Dam removal on the Klamath starting in the next two years offers an opportunity for wild spring and fall Chinook to recolonize those lost spawning regions of the upper basin. Removal of the dams will provide a major boost to Klamath fisheries and to the local people who depend those salmon.



Alamy

Expanded Koppi protections will benefit rare species and a growing ecotourism economy.

Whole-Watershed Protections for Koppi

The Koppi River is the most biodiverse salmon ecosystem in the world—featuring Amur tigers, Blakiston’s fish owls, Steller’s sea eagles, and Russia’s strongest remaining runs of Sakhalin taimen and Asian masu salmon. Wild Salmon Center helped to create the 97,000-acre Koppi Reserve in 2010, followed by the 445,000-acre traditional use area for Orochi hunters and gatherers in the Koppi watershed. Now, we are working with our partners at Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation to add **an additional three natural monuments—totaling an additional 85,000 acres**—in the area. The goal is to install base levels of protection from headwaters to sea.

The work not only benefits the key species that call Koppi home, including the endangered Sakhalin taimen, but also a growing ecotourism economy. Outfitters in the area can apply for permits for limited hunts for sable and catch-and-release fishing for taimen on the river. Several guides participate in WSC’s taimen monitoring program in the region, which seeks to build a basic understanding of the population and behavior of these giants.

Meanwhile, our partners at Sakhalin Environment Watch are teaming up with local fishermen to protect Sakhalin taimen and chum and pink strongholds, as part of the 30-river Wild Salmon Territory initiative on Sakhalin’s northeast coast. The coalition supports anti-poaching patrols and new protections on the Nabil River and the Dagi River (*pictured below*).

KEYSTONE SPOTLIGHT: Blakiston’s Fish Owl

Giant owls need giant trees. But the salmon-eating Blakiston’s fish owl—the largest of the world’s 230 owl species and one of the rarest—needs a special kind of tree. It requires big trees with nesting cavities in close proximity to salmon-rich waters that don’t completely freeze over in the winter.

The peculiarities of the Blakiston’s was almost entirely unknown prior to 2005, when Jonathan Slaght, a wildlife biologist with the Wildlife Conservation Society, co-founded the Blakiston’s Fish Owl Project in the Russian Far East.

The owl eats mammals but prefers a diet of overwintering juvenile salmon (such as the masu captured above) and spring frogs. It spends an unusual amount of time on the ground, wearing out footpaths along favored fishing holes, where it will perch in or near the water for up to four hours waiting for a meal.

Today, efforts to save the endangered owl include efforts by our partners at Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation to protect land surrounding the Koppi River.

Currently, only 19 percent of the owl’s prime Russian habitat is on protected land such as the Koppi River Reserve, while 43 percent is on land leased by logging companies. Conservationists’ ability to protect these remaining old-growth forests will determine the future of this fish owl and its favorite prey—juvenile salmon.

Jonathan Slaght



Clemens Raatschcan

Ryan Peterson



Large taimen are a key physical marker of healthy nutrient flow in Russian rivers.

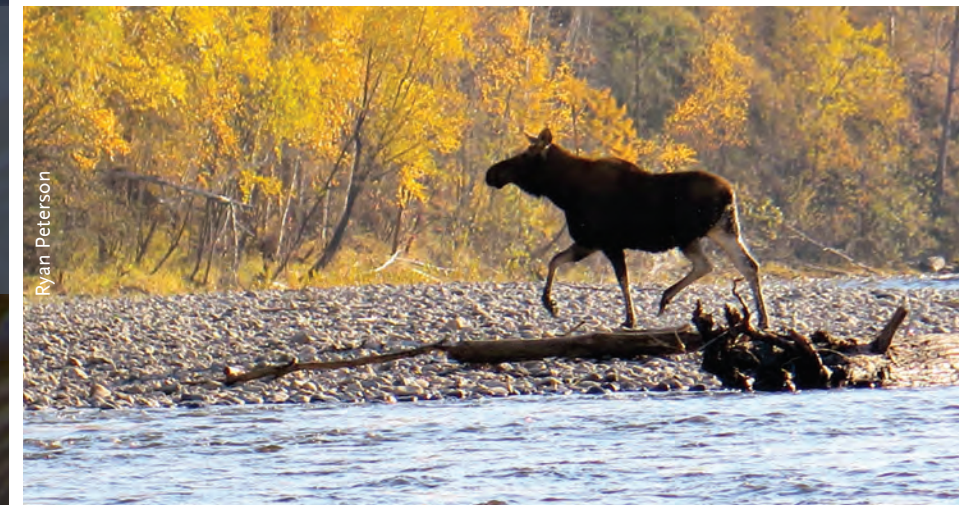
A Yellowstone for Taimen

Siberian taimen, the ancient, long-lived, oversized cousin of salmon, still reign in a dwindling kingdom of cold, undisturbed rivers in the Russian Far East. Roughly half of these watersheds are beyond the reach of even the most intrepid scientists—buffered by roadless expanses of larch, Korean pine, northern hardwoods, and spruce that have survived the illegal logging that feeds a voracious global appetite for wood in recent decades.

Wild Salmon Center and our partners at Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation are this year working on new protections in the region that would create a **network of adjacent reserves totaling 3.5 million acres**—50 percent larger than Yellowstone National Park. It will be a super stronghold for taimen.

In the early 2000s, Wild Salmon Center identified this amazing tract of untouched taimen watersheds as part of our early rapid assessments in the Russian Far East. Now, the regional government has prioritized protections here, recognizing the value of salmon resources and the need to stay ahead of Chinese-funded illegal logging ventures that are threatening these watersheds.

New expansions include the Tugur River (*pictured right*), a wild Siberian taimen stronghold, and the Maya River, a remote and wild tributary of the Uda, adjacent to the Tugur and which early surveys show is prime taimen habitat. In addition to runs of chum salmon, grayling, and lenok, this region is home to healthy populations of wolves, moose, elk, bears, and sea eagles, and is the traditional hunting and fishing grounds of Nanai and Evenk people. With protected areas and anti-poaching patrols, we can prevent the unraveling of these last, great places.



Guido Rahr

KEYSTONE SPOTLIGHT: Siberian Taimen

How does the mysterious and globally vulnerable Siberian taimen reach 100 pounds and five feet in length without going to sea? The short answer: it eats adult salmon returning from the ocean as soon as it is big enough to swallow them.

Our recent analysis of samples from the remote Tugur River shows that taimen switch to eating adult salmon when they reach about four feet. A 101-pound Siberian taimen sampled and released in 2018 on the Tugur was almost entirely comprised of marine nutrients from digested chums—“pure salmon,” says WSC Science Director Matt Sloat.

Taimen swallow the salmon whole and digest them piecemeal, like a large python. A set of backward facing teeth in their gills pull the salmon into their digestive tract.

These large fish aren’t just a novelty. They are a physical marker of healthy nutrient flow up these rivers and throughout the food web, delivered by migrating salmon as well as grayling and lenok. And the whole river system depends on that flow.

The Stronghold Fund is supporting a new organization working on the Dean River and inner British Columbia coast.

The Stronghold Fund

Early returns from WSC's Impact Fund

Wild Salmon Center created The Stronghold Fund to financially support and bolster critically important campaigns and to breathe life into ambitious new conservation opportunities.

The fund aims to focus strategic and timely investments in stronghold rivers and regions for key partnership-based initiatives. This partnership-based model has always been a core part of Wild Salmon Center's DNA; the fund continues that tradition because we've learned that we're more likely to achieve our goal when conservation groups work together and bring complementary strengths to a unified campaign.

We continue to fundraise for The Stronghold Fund and are making progress. To date we've raised nearly \$10 million toward a \$15 million goal. Importantly, the fund is not an endowment. It's what we call a **"win-now" resource that will be spent down on the initiatives that are most urgent in Pacific Rim watersheds.** Ultimately, our goal is to make The Stronghold Fund the central vehicle for donors to support strategic partnership efforts to conserve the places that matter most to wild salmon and steelhead.

Though we continue to focus on capitalizing the fund, we've made a few early and important investments in the last year. They are:

A commitment to support communications capacity and resources for the coalition defending Bristol Bay — This coalition includes WSC and our core partners in Alaska and is working to safeguard the region from the proposed Pebble Mine. Its mission is to ensure that the world's most prolific wild runs of sockeye salmon are protected for future generations.

Seed funding for Coastal Rivers Conservancy — The mission of this new organization based in British Columbia (see page 10) is to use advocacy, science, and public education to secure the long-term ecological health of the Dean River and inner BC central coast and its outstanding wild salmon and steelhead populations.



A grant to SkeenaWild Conservation Trust — Wild Salmon Center's long-time ally is continuing its work to conserve the Skeena River watershed in northern British Columbia. These efforts include: prohibiting industrial development on Flora, Agnew, and Horsey banks (critical salmon and steelhead habitat in the Skeena River estuary); working with First Nations on land use plans that include protection strategies for the Babine watershed; and expanding SkeenaWild's capacity to reform mining in the region, including efforts to stop the proposed open pit coal mine in the Telkwa Watershed.

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

2018 Donors

Thank you to all our donors for helping make 2018 a success. With your support, we can ensure the health and abundance of wild salmon and steelhead into the future.

The Stronghold Fund*

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*see pg 24

Foundations, Corporations, Government, and NGOs

AmazonSmile
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Eric Dobkin and WSC Chairman of the Board Deke Welles on the Dean River, B.C.

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FUNDER SPOTLIGHT: Yellow Dog Community & Conservation Foundation

Yellow Dog Flyfishing Adventures has been sending anglers to remote fly fishing destinations all over the world since 1999.

Over the past twenty years, Montana-based Yellow Dog has grown to a staff of 26 and books remote destinations from the coast of Dubai to the fly-out lodges of Bristol Bay, Alaska. With access to some of the greatest angling destinations in the world, Yellow Dog staff and clients experience firsthand the importance of conservation work in protecting the fresh and saltwater fisheries they love.

Yellow Dog established the Yellow Dog Community & Conservation Foundation (YDCCF) to support organizations, projects, and individuals that are making a difference in the regions where Yellow Dog staff and clients work, fish, and travel.

“Yellow Dog has always tried to find ways to give back to these amazing fisheries and destinations we care about as anglers,” says Tom Melvin, Director of Sales for Yellow Dog Flyfishing Adventures. “Having personally seen many of our destinations, I understand just how important it is for us to preserve these fishing opportunities for generations to come.”

By supporting local civic programs, sportsmen’s access, and fishery conservation, Yellow Dog’s foundation provides its clients a pathway to connect and give back to the protection



The Yellow Dog Flyfishing staff in Bozeman, Montana.

and preservation of fresh and saltwater fisheries. Last year alone, YDCCF supported 20 community and conservation-based efforts across its fly fishing destinations and leveraged matching gifts from 64 lodges worldwide.

In 2018, YDCCF made a grant to Wild Salmon Center to support our work to reconnect 150 miles of cold water habitat for wild salmon and steelhead throughout Washington’s Olympic Peninsula. “Supporting an organization like WSC is important to us because they’re the ones making a real difference on the ground,” says Dillon Gruber, Associate Director of YDCCF. “We’re seeing that we can make a real difference when we combine our power as a business with the passion of our clients.”

Learn more at yellowdogflyfishing.com.



Boomerang outdoor club chairwoman Valentina Mezenteva (center) and staff greet former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman on Sakhalin Island. Our partners at Boomerang conducted 14 salmon education seminars with teachers across the Russian Far East this year.

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WSC's Ameer Pacheco and Sara LaBorde with Kay Treacle (center) of the Harder Foundation.

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PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: Russian Salmon Association

Our allies at the Moscow-based Russian Salmon Association, led by chairman Gennady Zharkov (below, left), had a strong year, passing federal legislation that brings predictability to sportfishing in Russia and strengthens conservation measures on key salmon and taimen fishing rivers across the country. Learn more at russiansalmon.org





Alamy

Begin Your Legacy of Wild Salmon Strongholds

If you haven't yet made a will or other estate plans, now is the best time to start.

A will is an important plan to have in place no matter your age or circumstances—and an excellent way to provide for the causes and places you care most about, including the North Pacific's best remaining wild salmon and steelhead rivers. Your support through planned gifts (like bequests) is vital to WSC's mission, because protecting our most important watersheds will take a multi-generational commitment.

Right now, Wild Salmon Center has a unique opportunity to do more with your planned gift: a generous donor has offered to match all new bequests to WSC, doubling your impact on strongholds for wild fish.

Thank you for keeping wild salmon strongholds in mind as you plan for the future. With your help, we'll work to ensure these globally-important ecosystems are protected for the benefit of our children and grandchildren.

Learn more about planned giving (and our new FreeWill tool for estate planning) by visiting wildsalmoncenter.org/legacy or contacting Kim Kosa at 971-255-5562 or kkosa@wildsalmoncenter.org.

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Guido Rahr and Sergei Manakhov weighing taimen on the Tugur River, Russia.



WSC



WSC's Sara LaBorde (left) with partners and Rep. Peter DeFazio (center) at a celebration for Frank and Jeannne Moore (front row).

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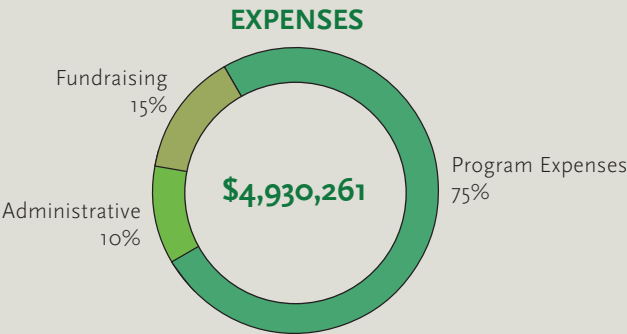
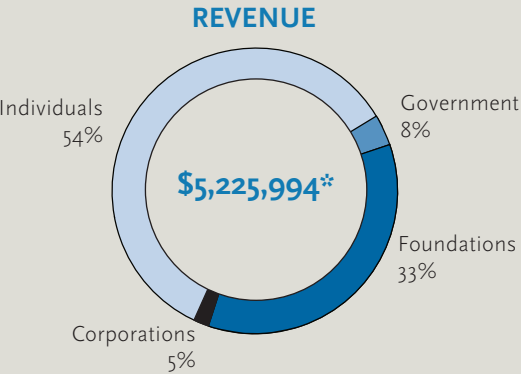
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Center: Anglers on the Dean River, BC. Right: WSC's Mark Trenholm with Kevin Rogers of GRIP 6, Oregon North Coast.



FINANCIALS: Statement of Activities
For the fiscal year ending December 31, 2018



*Revenue includes new funds raised during each calendar year, contributions pledged for work in future years, and funds raised through The Stronghold Fund.



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



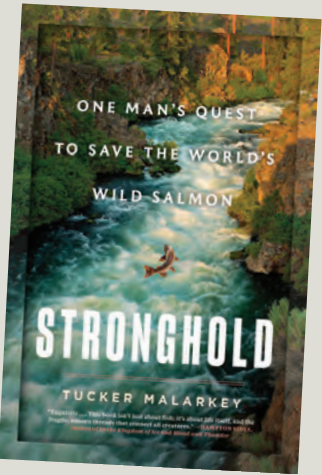
The Wild Salmon Center has been awarded the “Best in America” Seal of Excellence by the Independent Charities of America and Local Independent Charities of America. This signifies that upon rigorous independent review, the organization met the highest standards of public accountability as well as program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



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

BOOK SPOTLIGHT:
STRONGHOLD

We’re excited to announce the launch of *STRONGHOLD*, a new book from Random House by Tucker Malarkey about our CEO Guido Rahr and the fight to protect salmon around the Pacific. It follows his lifelong journey to becoming a passionate leader in salmon conservation and a strong voice for protecting the world’s last, great salmon rivers.



Find out more at:
wildsalmoncenter.org/strongholdbook

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Left: Bob Van Dyk at a public meeting in Astoria, Oregon. Center: Staff with Kate Crump at Patagonia Portland event. Right: Audie Paulus on the Oregon Coast.



& Board of Directors

New Additions

Wild Salmon Center is thrilled to introduce you to three new board members. All bring very different experiences and perspectives to our work, but they share a common passion for wild salmon and steelhead.



April Vokey

April Vokey (top) is a flyfishing guide, writer, FFF certified casting instructor, fly-tyer, speaker, and popular podcast host.

After ten years of guiding in British Columbia, she now splits her year between her home on the Skeena and Australia.

“In all of the inhabited places I have been on this planet, none are as pristine and wild as the Skeena,” Vokey says. “My hope is that WSC and the public will team together to continue fighting to keep the Skeena wild.”

Ray Lane

Ray Lane (bottom left, center, with daughters) is one of Silicon Valley’s most successful business leaders, and is currently Managing Partner at GreatPoint Ventures and partner emeritus at Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers.

Lane is also an avid flyfisherman with a soft spot for Alaska. “I have visited Alaska once or twice a year since 2003,” he says. “And I am a big believer in Wild Salmon Center’s mission to provide fundamental protection of salmon and their spawning habitat to protect the entire wildlife ecosystem in the Pacific Rim.”



Steve Kohl

Steven Kohl (bottom right) has been a longtime partner of Wild Salmon Center and our Russia program throughout his 38-year career at the International Conservation Division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. A fluent Russian speaker, he’s now retired, but still active in promoting binational cooperation.

“Of all the countries in the world, what the U.S. and Russia do to conserve fish and wildlife and cooperate bilaterally serves as an example (and hopefully, an inspiration) to other nations,” Kohl says.

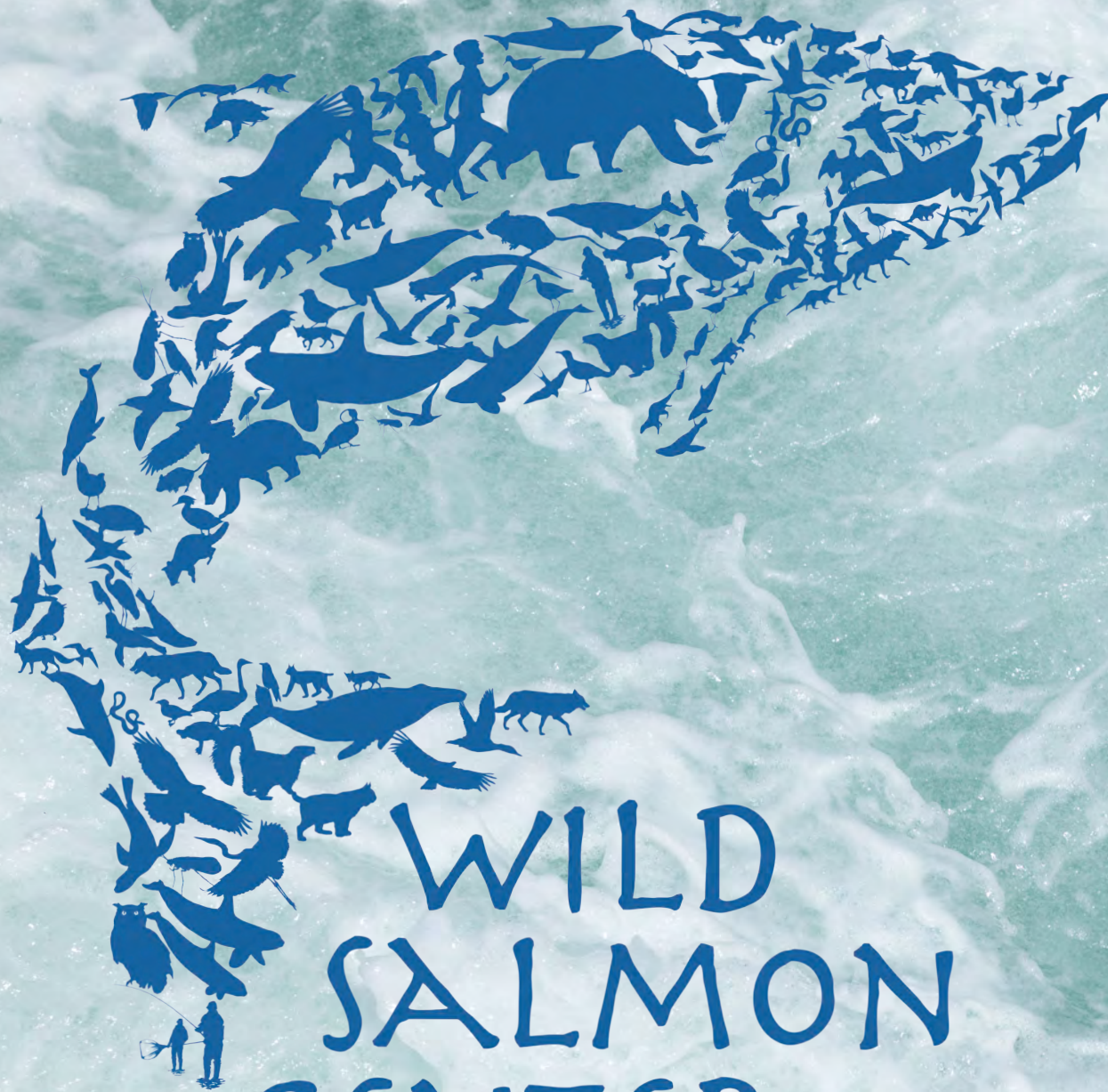
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Dmitry S. Pavlov, Ph.D.
Peter Seligmann
Peter W. Soverel (Founder)
Jack Stanford, Ph.D.

Front cover: Lake Iliamna sockeye by Jason Ching.

Back Cover: Wild Salmon Center’s custom logo design was created by Ed Hepp and is based on a study by fisheries biologists with the Washington Department of Natural Resources. The report found that at least 137 wildlife species in the Pacific Northwest alone—from caddis flies to orcas—are predators or scavengers of salmon at some stage in their life cycle.



WILD SALMON CENTER

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