

An aerial photograph of a scenic landscape. In the foreground, a deep blue lake with clear, turquoise water near the shore meets a sandy beach. A dense forest of green trees covers the middle ground, leading up to a range of rugged, rocky mountains in the background under a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The text '30 years WILD SALMON CENTER' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

30 years
WILD SALMON CENTER

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Scaling the Stronghold Approach

It started with a map, and a vision.

At Wild Salmon Center's spring 2000 board meeting, I presented a strategy that would focus our work for the next 20 years.

The vision was an archipelago of protected watersheds securing the “best of the best”—the most productive and ecologically healthy Pacific salmon ecosystems. Not just for salmon, but all the wild species and communities they sustain.

We looked at a map of the entire North Pacific that showed a stronghold archipelago arching through mountains, forests, and rivers to bring together Japan, the Russian Far East, British Columbia, Alaska, and the Pacific Northwest.

This vision clearly represented the most ambitious ecosystem conservation effort ever attempted across four countries on the Pacific Rim. But how to make it real?

We settled on a simple strategy: safeguard each river with proactive habitat and wild fish protections, while building up local and regional organizations to anticipate and block new threats. We made a multidecadal commitment to each river system, knowing many changes wouldn't be immediate.

Over years of trial and error, we learned how to effectively partner, how to balance science and advocacy, and how to navigate local and regional politics. We kept our eyes on the prize, and eventually the wins came: eight new national and regional parks, thousands of river miles with expanded riparian setbacks, more than six and a half million acres of habitat protected. We've helped transform Russia's commercial salmon fishing industry, and won successful campaigns to block hydroelectric dams, gold mines, clearcut logging, and fish hatchery expansion. In fact, we have yet to lose a fight to defend our strongholds from major threats.

The stronghold strategy is working. Now we must meet this moment—one of heightened threats from climate change, resource extraction, and geopolitical strife. The Russian Far East is a critical part of the stronghold archipelago, yet war in

the Ukraine has been horrific, deeply straining U.S.-Russia relations. We remain committed to our Russian partners—with whom we have worked closely for decades—and to the conservation of the world-class salmon watersheds that flow into the Western Pacific.

To make the stronghold network permanent, we need to build on our strengths, scale up our work, and accelerate conservation across the North Pacific.

Rivers are living things, and salmon swim through them like the nutrients that feed all organisms. Like every living thing, rivers need an immune system to repel the threats that the future will bring. The passion, commitment, and effectiveness of local conservation groups form the heart of this response system. Even against huge odds—and large multinational corporations—powerful local voices can win out. Knowing this, we're prioritizing grants and staff support for partner organizations across the North Pacific. But our long-term goal is a permanent fund to sustain these defenders in perpetuity.

Our work has ripple effects beyond salmon conservation. Across the 100 million acre stronghold archipelago, we'll also be making key contributions to global biodiversity conservation and carbon sequestration.

Conservation is a long game. We've come far, but in many ways, we're just getting started. Our plan will succeed with the gift we give our children: some of the most biologically important—and beautiful—places anywhere, and a thriving stronghold network built by the most ambitious wild salmon conservation effort ever envisioned.



Guido Rahr
President and Chief Executive



Iliamna River, Alaska

Jason Ching

Yonder

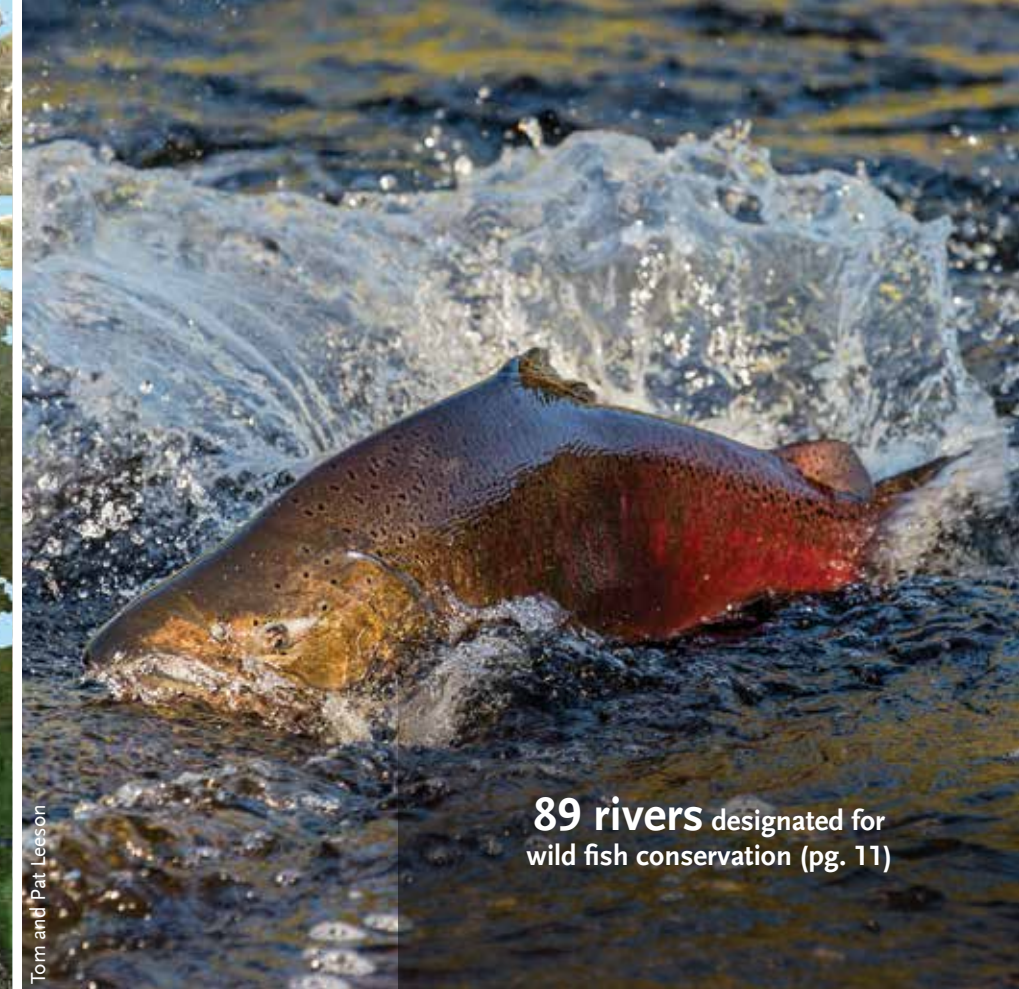
70% of Kamchatka salmon fisheries by volume now either certified by the Marine Stewardship Council or actively in pre-certification (pg. 8)

14 organizations launched, including the Coastal Rivers Conservancy, and currently supporting 25 total (pg. 24)



celebrating
30
years

6.7 million acres of salmon habitat protected across the Pacific Rim (pg. 8)



89 rivers designated for wild fish conservation (pg. 11)

Sustaining
100s of
salmon-reliant
species



5 major projects stopped, shelved, or stalled, including three dams, an LNG pipeline, and Pebble Mine (pg. 6)

60,000 miles of Oregon rivers and streams safeguarded through expanded riparian habitat rules (pg. 10)

Winning the Fight for Bristol Bay's Future

When it comes to salmon strongholds, Bristol Bay is our North Star. This vast, pristine Alaskan watershed drains an area the size of Wisconsin, riven with wild tributaries that support the greatest sockeye salmon runs on Earth.

We've always known that we can't lose Bristol Bay. That's why salmon advocates have been fighting against Pebble Mine since 2005, when it was first proposed for Bristol Bay's headwaters.

Wild Salmon Center dove into this battle more than a decade ago. In the years since, we've helped to build the Bristol Bay Defense Fund—our Tribal-led coalition backed by fishers, conservation groups, and the majority of Alaskans—and to drive the campaign into the national spotlight. The coalition has provided the science on why Pebble Mine is the wrong mine in the wrong place. We've marshaled politicians, celebrities, and millions of citizens to speak out against the mine. Yet despite the U.S. government's own findings that Pebble poses an insupportable risk to Bristol Bay, this mining plan came dangerously close to getting key federal permits in 2020.

We never stopped fighting: from building bipartisan opposition to Pebble in Washington, to winning a science-based decision to deny permits, to making sure the issue was a priority for the incoming Biden administration. In fall 2021, the Environmental Protection Agency restarted the process to permanently protect Bristol Bay under the federal Clean Water Act: something our coalition has long demanded.

Now we're gearing up for a major campaign and public comment push to make sure that EPA finishes the job. Because Bristol Bay isn't just the world's greatest sockeye salmon fishery; it's become a symbol of what's possible when we apply smart, relentless pressure over decades. And that's why Pebble's last chapter is finally within sight.



Alaska Lake Aleknagik

Tim Powden, Alamy
Jason Ching

Amplifying Susitna Voices

Alaska's Susitna River is one of North America's largest undammed rivers and an ecological treasure—supporting five Pacific salmon species, stunning wildlife, a commercial fishery, and more than 20 backcountry sport fishing lodges.

We've long recognized the extraordinary value of this salmon system. And we've fought in the past to protect it: helping rally a powerful grassroots coalition in 2016 that stopped the proposed Susitna-Watana Hydroelectric Project—a dam even larger than Hoover.

Right now, local leaders in the fishing and tourism industries are rallying again as we work to head off the West Susitna Access Road, a 100-mile, publicly-financed plan that would pave the way for hard-rock mining, logging, and other development projects throughout the Susitna drainage.

In the Susitna and in salmon rivers across the North Pacific, passionate local communities are key to securing a future for wild salmon strongholds. When communities center on salmon runs and devotion to place, they're ready to ward off threats like this destructive road.



"Bristol Bay is one of the most special places on Earth. No mine is worth risking a fishery that feeds the world."

— Emily Anderson, Alaska Program Director

THEN / NOW

After 126 years of recorded data, Bristol Bay—the world's largest sockeye salmon fishery—continues to lead the world with record runs of over 50 million since 2015.

A Growing Network of Protected Rivers

The roots of Wild Salmon Center trace back to the rivers of the Russian Far East. Thirty years ago, we realized that remote rivers like the Tugur, Kol, and Uda represent some of the most important salmon ecosystems left on Earth. Three regions of Russia—Khabarovsk, Sakhalin Island, and Kamchatka—account for a third of the Pacific Rim’s wild salmon.

We made it our mission to keep these systems intact. We’ve helped to introduce a sustainable fishing model in Kamchatka, where 70 percent of salmon fisheries by volume are now Marine Stewardship Council-certified or working towards a plan for certification. And with our partners, we’ve safeguarded nearly seven million acres of salmon habitat. Half of this acreage was won in 2021: the result of perseverance and close collaboration with local organizations like the Khabarovsk Wildlife Foundation.

With KWF, we helped make the scientific justification for two new reserves on Khabarovsk’s Tugur and Maia Rivers: reserves protecting 3.7 million acres of tributaries and mainstem, an area surpassing the size of Yellowstone. The Tugur supports seven salmonid species—including taimen, the largest of these species—and wildlife ranging from Blakiston’s fish owls to wolves and Manchurian elk. The Uda River, of which the Maia is the largest tributary, is also an important salmon producer, and one of the last places on Earth that still produces giant salmon-eating taimen.

Protected area status for the Tugur and Maia ensures that these vast ecosystems can continue to serve as some of the planet’s most effective carbon sinks, and also as brakes against expanding threats from logging, mining, and industrial development.

“Salmon conservation in the Russian Far East is at an inflection point,” says WSC President & CEO Guido Rahr. “These rivers aren’t yet degraded by development, but without protection, they will be. Now, more than ever, we support our Russian partners working to keep these extraordinary rivers intact.”



Tugur River, Khabarovsk



“In the Russian Far East, a growing network of protected areas is securing salmon strongholds and their priceless benefits for people near and far.”
— Mariusz Wroblewski, Western Pacific Director

Of 11 Russian salmon river systems identified as priorities for conservation in 2002 by WSC and Russian scientists, 8 are now safeguarded in regional and national parks.

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Guido Rahr

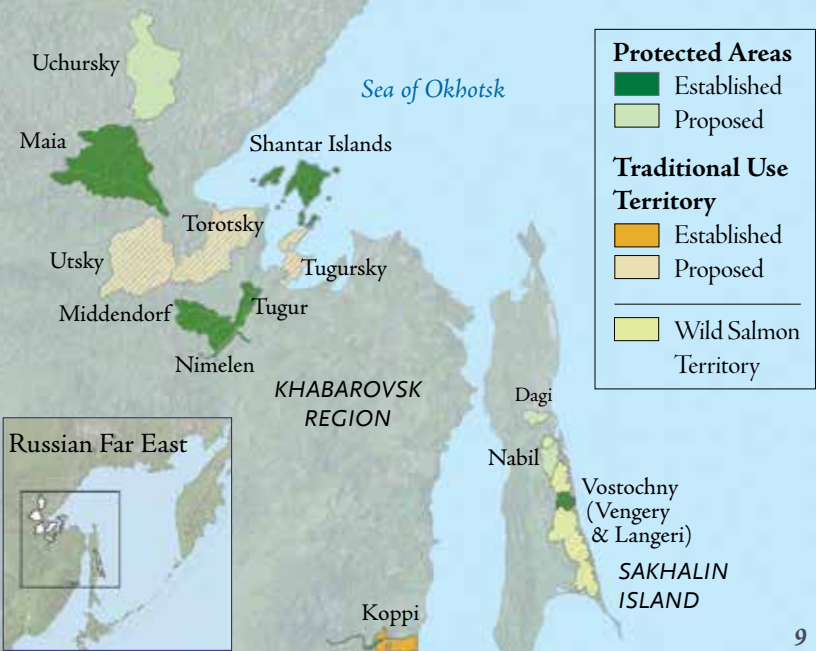
Mapping Taimen Diversity

In our 30-year history of Trans-Pacific partnerships, we’ve seen the power of science to build bridges. In the Western Pacific, research by WSC Science Director Dr. Matt Sloat and an international team seeks to shine light on taimen, the largest of all salmonid species and among the least studied.

In a 2021 study, Dr. Sloat’s team helped analyze Siberian taimen DNA from three remote Russian and Mongolian river systems: the Tugur, Amur, and the Arctic-flowing Yenisei. This work holds insights for conservationists working to ensure that taimen survive the challenges of modern climate change.

Among the findings are genetic distinctions among taimen from different watersheds, as populations adapted to local conditions over time. In the Tugur, home to some of the world’s healthiest remaining taimen populations, genetic diversity was unexpectedly high: data that can help facilitate future comparisons and identify early signs elsewhere of genetic diversity loss.

“The world’s rivers are changing before our eyes,” says Dr. Sloat. “If salmon and taimen are to survive, the answers likely begin with the genetic baselines we’re now starting to build.”



Huge Milestones for Oregon Forests and Fish

In the Lower 48, the largest collection of strong wild salmon runs is in Oregon, all of them traveling through private land. But our science shows that the state’s lack of adequate riparian setbacks, which directly contribute to rising stream temperatures, are among the greatest threats to these wild runs. That’s why our Oregon team has focused on policy reforms that protect forest waters since the start of the millennium. In the past year, we’ve achieved historic wins—and the groundwork for future wins—across the Oregon forest landscape.

After years of grappling with industrial timber companies, WSC Oregon Director Bob Van Dyk led an effort to broker an unprecedented accord with the industry to overhaul the Oregon Forest Practices Act to better protect wild salmon streams on 10 million acres of private forestlands. Our hard work came to fruition in early 2022, when the legislature passed the monumental Private Forest Accord, securing long-term protections for salmon and cold, clean water across tens of thousands of stream miles that flow through private Oregon forestland.

We’ve also long sought a multidecadal agreement to protect key North Coast strongholds on state forestlands. In early 2022, the state legislature established the Elliott State Research Forest, unshackling this 82,000-acre coho stronghold from logging mandates and transforming much of it into a conservation and research forest. Next, we expect the Oregon Board of Forestry to vote on a plan to protect hundreds of thousands of acres on the Tillamook Rainforest.

“These long, hard-fought campaigns are showing us a way out of Oregon’s Timber Wars,” says Van Dyk. “With these legislative milestones, we’re closer than ever to achieving a land management ethos that reflects today’s values.”

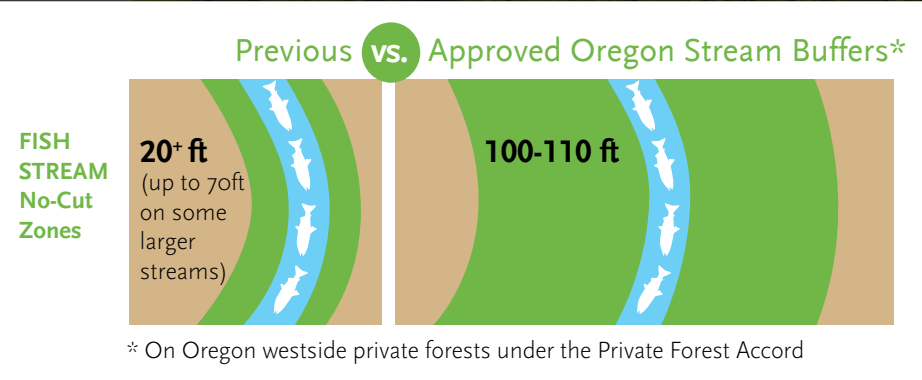


Alamy

“With the Private Forest Accord, Oregon is now responding with needed urgency to protect salmon and steelhead and the clean, cold water that they require.”
— Bob Van Dyk, Oregon and California Policy Director



In 2001, we launched our campaign for Oregon forestry reform. We’re now on track to protect 310,000+ acres of state land in addition to up to one million acres of private land protected by the Forest Accord.



Expanding Wild Fish Sanctuaries

With climate change already impacting rivers around the North Pacific, protecting wild fish genetic diversity is key to securing a future for salmon.

Wild fish zones—areas where wild populations are prioritized over hatchery production and closely monitored for health—aim to do just that. These zones help safeguard the genetic diversity of locally adapted wild salmonids, protecting a portfolio of survival strategies to get them through the current and future climate crisis.

In December 2021, the Oregon Fish & Wildlife Commission expanded its network of wild fish zones south to the California border, building on a novel WSC-backed 2014 plan that created zones from the Columbia River to Cape Blanco. This creates the largest network of wild fish management zones south of Canada (see map at right).

If successful, it could offer a new model for salmon strongholds elsewhere.



For a more detailed map, go to: wildsalmoncenter.org/wfea

“As any good investment manager knows, you need diversity to survive unpredictable conditions,” says WSC President & CEO Guido Rahr. “That’s absolutely true of salmon as well. Preserving genetic diversity is our best tool for helping salmon adapt to a changing world.”

Fishing Closer to Home

For the North Pacific’s Indigenous salmon communities, fishing has historically happened in rivers. Modern commercial fishing is different; today, most “wild-caught” Pacific salmon in restaurants and grocery stores comes from fleets at sea.

In “mixed-stock” ocean fisheries, countless migrating salmon runs mingle before heading to home rivers. When marine nets are drawn, catches can include members of far-flung salmon runs: some vulnerable, or even endangered.

Increasingly, Indigenous communities, scientists, and fisheries managers are seeking to direct commercial fisheries to abundant salmon stocks while reducing the impacts on at-risk salmon populations. Many are looking to the fishing practices of the past. From the near-shore pound nets of Sakhalin Island’s Wild Salmon Territory to experimental fish weirs in British Columbia, selective fishing gear types are gaining traction, along with the concept of in-river “terminal fisheries.”

“Closer-to-home fisheries help us know exactly what we’re catching,” says WSC Salmon Watershed Scientist Dr. Will Atlas. “And selective fishing practices have been around for millennia. This is ancient, practical knowledge that can make a difference right now.”

Already, these practices are proving out on the Columbia River, where an experimental pound net established by Wild Fish Conservancy and supported by WSC has shown near-zero mortality for vulnerable species. That stellar track record convinced Washington officials to begin the process of legalizing traps as commercial fishing gear, potentially blazing a path for the rest of the West Coast.

Dr. Atlas and WSC board member Dr. Andrea Reid, a member of the Nisga’a Nation, are among those publishing studies in this new field of research.

“Selective fishing could be a game changer, and not just for salmon conservation,” Dr. Atlas says. “Our work shows that these techniques can deliver better results for all communities, including local fishers.”



Olivia Leigh Nowack

Decoding Wild Fish DNA

On British Columbia’s Central Coast, genetically distinct salmon runs live in each watershed. This biodiversity protects long-term species health and resilience. Understanding salmonid genetic diversity is critical to improve wild fish conservation outcomes and fisheries management, and potentially drive selective fishing guidelines in B.C. and beyond.

That’s the aim of a new wild salmon genome project co-led by Wild Salmon Center, Simon Fraser University, and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, with funding from Genome BC’s GeneSolve program and other supporters. Field work is already underway in partnership with the Heiltsuk, Nuxalk, Kitasoo/Xai’xais, and Lax Kw’alaams First Nations, and the Coastal Rivers Conservancy.

“Some of B.C.’s key salmon populations once supported large fisheries that have since collapsed,” says WSC Science Director Dr. Matt Sloat. “We want to understand how that happened, and direct fisheries away from vulnerable populations—especially ones that are the focus of recovery efforts.”



Bryant DeRoy



THEN / NOW

New data shows that among monitored Washington Coast Chinook populations, more than 80 percent of harvest occurs in marine fisheries outside the state.



“A better future for salmon fisheries starts with supporting the revitalization of Indigenous fishing technologies and management practices that are rooted in conservation science.”

— Dr. Will Atlas, Salmon Watershed Scientist

Building the Science of Steelhead Recovery

Washington’s remote Olympic Peninsula is a steelheader’s mecca, home to cold, clean water and some of the best spawning and rearing habitat in the Lower 48.

Yet for decades, Tribes, sportfishers, and management agencies have watched steelhead numbers plummet, while struggling to agree on recovery actions. In part, that’s because historical steelhead data—science capable of shining a broad lens on these trends—has been scarce.

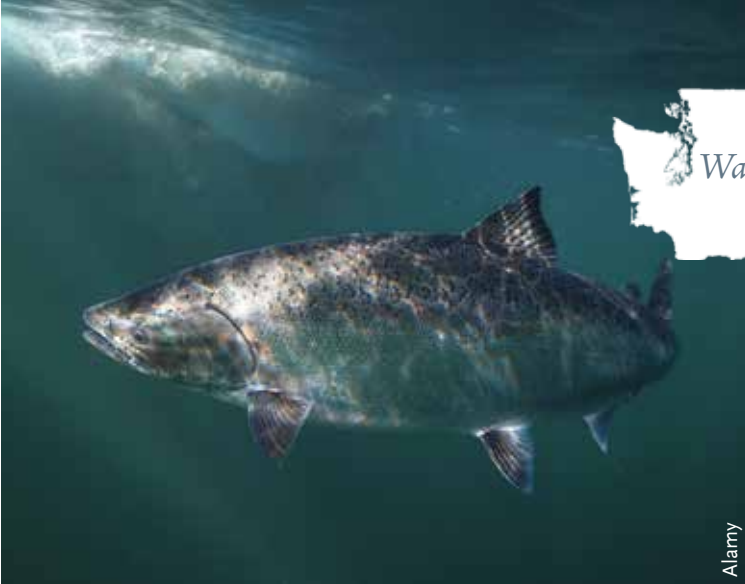
Filling in those data gaps for steelhead and other understudied salmonids is a priority for conservation scientists like Wild Salmon Center Science Director Dr. Matt Sloat. New studies from Dr. Sloat and colleagues find that Olympic Peninsula wild steelhead runs are half the size they were 70 years ago. And they’re also returning to freshwater one to two months later.

Knowing that steelhead have lost much of their critical genetic diversity—both from declines in early returning fish and overall population size—offers fisheries managers a way to plan for long-term steelhead recovery, says Dr. Sloat.

“Our research shows that agencies will need strategies to restore the level of steelhead diversity within each river, including run timing, which underpinned the strong runs of the past,” Dr. Sloat says.

These insights are already expanding perspectives on steelhead recovery. In November 2021, the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife created a community advisory panel to develop new, watershed-specific management plans for the state’s steelhead populations. WSC Government Affairs Director Jess Helsley, a panel member, says this approach represents a paradigm shift in the agency’s view of fishery health.

“This is an opportunity to fundamentally change how Washington’s coastal steelhead are managed,” Helsley says. “Let’s take the time to truly set steelhead on a recovery path.”



Alamy

A Step Forward for Springers

From Northern California to Washington’s Chehalis River, spring Chinook face existential threats including dams, warming water, and habitat loss. June 2021 brought a significant win in the long fight to protect these prized, embattled wild fish runs, when the California Fish and Game Commission voted unanimously to support the petition of local Tribes by adding Upper Klamath-Trinity spring Chinook to the state’s Endangered Species List.

“The commissioners listened to Indigenous knowledge and the best available science,” says Wild Salmon Center Science Director Dr. Matt Sloat. “This is a huge step forward in the fight to recover these fish.”

The state ESA listing reflects the groundbreaking work of a team co-led by Dr. Tasha Thompson, now a postdoctoral fellow at WSC, which discovered a key gene distinguishing spring Chinook from their fall-run cousins. This gene drives springers to return to freshwater early enough to claim exclusive spawning habitat high in watersheds.

“The decision affirms what Dr. Thompson and her team made clear: that Klamath spring Chinook are genetically distinct and irreplaceable,” says Dr. Sloat. “But it’s also an acknowledgment that springers are nearing the brink, and we have much work to do.”



“This is an opportunity to fundamentally change how Washington’s coastal steelhead are managed.”

— Jess Helsley, Government Affairs Director



THEN / NOW

New research shows that Olympic Peninsula steelhead runs have declined by 55 percent since the 1950s—and now peak in March, one to two months later.

Salmon Restoration: Built to Scale

It started in the Siuslaw, a river that once supported one of the Oregon Coast's largest runs of wild coho salmon. The plan, set out in a meticulously researched 2019 report, sought to recover the river's threatened coho populations through high-leverage restoration work targeted in 11 priority Siuslaw watersheds over six years.

This strategic approach to salmon recovery is core to the Wild Salmon Center-run Coast Coho Partnership, a uniquely effective collaboration in which federal, state, and NGO partners work with coastal restoration teams to prioritize and fund restoration projects based on the best available science. In Washington, a similar approach forms the foundation of WSC's Cold Water Connection campaign, a partnership working to reopen 125 miles of coastal salmon habitat by 2027.

What both of our networks have in common—besides a focus on salmon as a keystone species—is the shovel-ready project pipeline that we're now rolling out across the Pacific Northwest Coast. We've done the legwork: scoping the top projects among some 4,300 known Olympic Peninsula fish barriers, while building detailed strategic action plans for four—and counting—Oregon wild fish strongholds.

Now we're scaling up this work, implementing projects ranging from culvert replacements in Washington's Sol Duc River to habitat improvements on working cattle ranches on Oregon's Rogue River. In Oregon, our restoration and policy work supports the recovery of Oregon Coast coho: moving us closer to a goal of delisting the species from the federal Endangered Species Act.

"Watershed restoration work done right relies on local partners and working relationships among neighbors," says WSC Coastal Program Director Mark Trenholm. "To sustain this work—and accelerate it—you invest in the people working on the ground. This is our focus."



From 1994 to 2005, mean annual abundance for Oregon Coast Coho salmon spawners was 85,543; from 2007 to 2019, that mean rose to 128,652.

THEN / NOW

Davis Slough, Coos River, Oregon



Northwest

Brian Kelley

Paul Jeffrey, Alamy



"To sustain this work—and accelerate it—you invest in the people working on the ground."

— Mark Trenholm, Coast Program Director

Tapping New Funding Streams

In April, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's National Fish Passage Program awarded nearly \$2.5 million to projects in Pacific Northwest salmon strongholds.

According to Wild Salmon Center Government Affairs Director Jess Helsley, it's just the first of several rounds of funding from 2021's federal infrastructure bill for fish barrier projects in Oregon, Washington, and California.

These new funding streams are match-made for the project pipeline we've built through our Cold Water Connection campaign in Washington. Together with our partners Trout Unlimited and the Coast Salmon Partnership, we've identified the most critical fish barrier projects on the Washington Coast. (Three, in the Quillayute basin, have received USFWS funding so far.) We've also leveraged private funds to kickstart the conceptual design work that Tribal and local governments often can't afford.

"We built the Cold Water Connection campaign to remove barriers," Helsley says. "That's true for fish, and also for the local partners who might need a bit of help wading through streams—and sometimes red tape—to secure funding from an often cumbersome application process."



Paul Souders, Getty Images



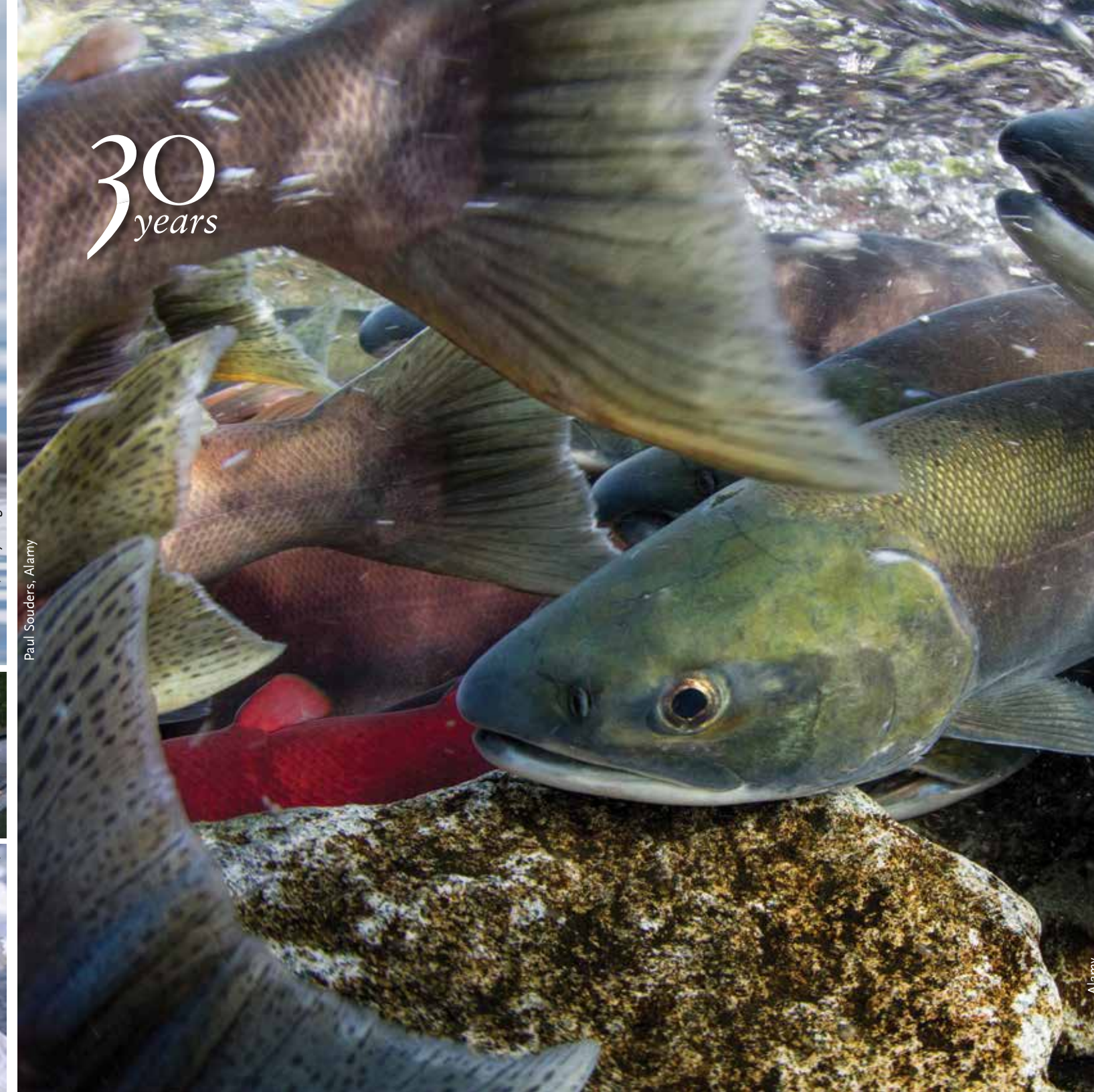
Paul Souders, Getty Images



Ken Morrish



Alamy



Paul Souders, Alamy



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Perry Broderick



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Next: Meeting the Moment

In human history, the challenges for wild salmon and their home rivers have never been greater than what we face right now. Climate change and development threats are accelerating, creeping northward into even the wildest and most remote of salmon rivers.

But over the last 30 years, we have created an organization capable of meeting this singularly challenging moment.

Over the course of a generation, Wild Salmon Center has built a highly collaborative network of scientists, conservationists, fishers, businesses, and Tribal, First Nations, and government officials. This mobilized international community spans three nations across the vast arc of Pacific salmon rivers, bolstered by more than a dozen organizations and coalitions that we've helped launch.

With our partners, we've secured major wins against damaging development in some of the world's best remaining salmon systems—from Bristol Bay to the Skeena River and the Oregon Coast. And we've initiated major shifts in policy, business practices, and infrastructure development—from forestry to fishing to fish barrier removals.

Now, in WSC's second generation, it's time to speed and scale our work to match today's new threats and

opportunities. We need to ensure that the biological integrity of this network of wild salmon strongholds—from Northern California to the Russian Far East—is not degraded.

Defending the ecological health of 100 million acres across our stronghold network will secure habitat for a full 25 percent of the world's wild salmon.

These wild salmon populations support myriad species across the North Pacific, including thousands of grizzly bears and an estimated 75 orca pods. They're key to the survival of local communities, including thriving fishing economies and at least 50 Indigenous groups. And their home rivers are crucial sources of freshwater, running through some of the last, best landscapes for carbon sequestration to slow climate change.

By keeping salmon and their rivers wild and resilient, our stronghold archipelago will be a refuge from the ravages of climate change—and an ark for the regeneration of other recovering salmon ecosystems.

We know this vision is possible because of what we've already achieved. Our work over the last three decades lays the foundation for what comes next, starting with the many exciting new initiatives we've launched in recent years. Where are we headed next? *Turn the page.*

Next: Unleashing Wild Diversity

Over the last two centuries, salmon management has focused on abundance above all else: the sheer numbers of salmon that can be harvested, year over year.

But as Pacific Chinook, steelhead, and sockeye runs crash, and fisheries close around the North Pacific, it's clear that an approach rooted solely in an agricultural paradigm will fail. For wild salmon to survive the development, fishing, and climate pressures facing them right now, we need to move rapidly to protect and restore the diversity of wild salmon and steelhead runs across their range. Increasingly, we see that the protection of a wide range of survival strategies, known as life histories, is the key to the future of wild salmon.

For years, Wild Salmon Center has been working to protect salmon biodiversity from the Oregon Coast to Kamchatka with a spectrum of tools that includes responsible fishing certifications and wild fish conservation areas. Now, we're taking that work into a different dimension—the molecular one—by using advances in the study of genetic coding to speed the protection of salmon biodiversity.

"The challenges to salmon diversity are growing, but so is our capacity for discovery and problem-solving," says WSC Science Director Dr. Matt Sloat. "Our growing team is ready to scale up our knowledge base and translate new discoveries into on-the-ground action."

Scaling Targeted Restoration Across the Pacific

In the last seven years, WSC's Oregon and Washington teams have developed novel approaches to prioritizing salmon habitat restoration in critical coastal watersheds.

On the Oregon Coast, we're working with local teams to map strategic restoration actions across eight watersheds from the Nehalem to the Rogue River in Oregon. On the Washington Coast, we're targeting the most important fish-blocking culverts to replace, working to open up 125 miles of critical coldwater habitat for salmon and steelhead.

We've now secured \$7.5 million in public and philanthropic funding for habitat restoration projects on the Oregon and Washington coasts. Already, our work is building resilience to climate change in coastal watersheds, by giving wild fish new access to coldwater tributaries, restored wetlands, and new habitat created by beavers.

Now we want to scale this strategy across the Pacific, through an expanded restoration team that would help international partners identify and execute high-leverage actions in their home rivers.

"Many Pacific strongholds are intact and highly productive today, but climate change and development pressures can generate the same conditions that led to sharp declines in much of the Pacific Northwest and California," says WSC Coastal Program Director Mark Trenholm. "We want to make sure that these currently healthy watersheds remain resilient in the face of an uncertain future."

On the Olympic Peninsula, WSC and partners' genetic decoding of early returning winter steelhead can help identify stream reaches used by these genetic stocks for priority protection.

In California, WSC Science Director Dr. Matt Sloat and a team of collaborators successfully secured new protections for spring Chinook in the Klamath and Trinity River basins based on their recent discovery that these spring runs were genetically distinct from their fall-run cousins.

"The challenges to salmon diversity are growing, but so is our capacity for discovery and problem-solving." — Dr. Matt Sloat, Science Director

Jack Polsky Fellowship Launched
The Jack Polsky Conservation Research Fellowship program was established by loved ones of the late Jack R. Polsky in 2021 to support early-career, post-doctoral scientists engaged in coldwater fish conservation. As our first Polsky Fellow, Dr. Tasha Thompson—a salmon conservation geneticist who resides by Oregon's North Umpqua River—joins our science team for two years to help develop a genomic database of Chinook salmon and steelhead. wildsalmoncenter.org/polskyfellowship.



NOW / FUTURE
In as little as 10 years, ongoing restoration and improved land use policy could lead to recovered Oregon Coast coho runs and potential removal from listing under the Endangered Species Act.



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On the Washington Coast, WSC is targeting the most important fish-blocking culverts to replace, working to open up 125 miles of critical coldwater habitat for salmon and steelhead.

In British Columbia, WSC's science team is working with First Nations and government partners to develop a genetic catalog of distinct regional wild salmon and steelhead runs that can help enable commercial fisheries to avoid small and vulnerable salmon populations.



Dr. Will Atlas with Ryan Stephens, a Heiltsuk Fisheries Technician, on the Koeye River.

Next: Water Solutions

Across the lush network of Pacific salmon rivers, many view water as an endless resource. But population growth, a warming climate, and increasing water demands make this a grave misconception.

If wild salmon are to have a chance to survive and thrive in this unfolding century, we must change how we manage the water supplies that sustain us all. And fast.

We're focusing on change in Oregon, once a leader in protecting river flows that has been leapfrogged by other regions around the North Pacific. Launched in 2020, Wild Salmon Center's Oregon Water Initiative is pushing a science-based paradigm shift in water management to keep rivers flowing clear and cold even as water demands change.

WSC and our partners earned a big boost for these efforts in March 2022, when the Oregon Legislature approved \$25 million to improve the drought resilience of rivers—the first budget allocation of its kind in Oregon. That included expansions of real-time stream monitoring, improvements to the state's understanding of critical coldwater zones, and new funding to protect river flows, remove fish passage barriers, and restore fish habitat.

Next, we're looking to modernize Oregon's outdated water planning framework and strengthen weak policies against water overuse and pollution from agriculture. This work may offer partnership models and policy solutions for other stronghold regions. (Alaska, for example, still allows industries to completely dewater salmon streams.)

"Abundant cold water is fundamental to salmon conservation, and that need will intensify in the decades ahead," says WSC Oregon Water Policy Director Caylin Barter. "We need to act now to craft long-term solutions for people, fish, and rivers. Oregon is fertile ground for proving that system-level change can happen."

The Carbon Conservation Opportunity

Protecting the last, best wild salmon rivers is work with cascading benefits. Over the last 30 years, our conservation efforts have focused on the protection of watersheds that contain more than six billion tons of the planet's most significant remaining carbon reserves. That's equivalent to 3.5 years of U.S. carbon emissions.

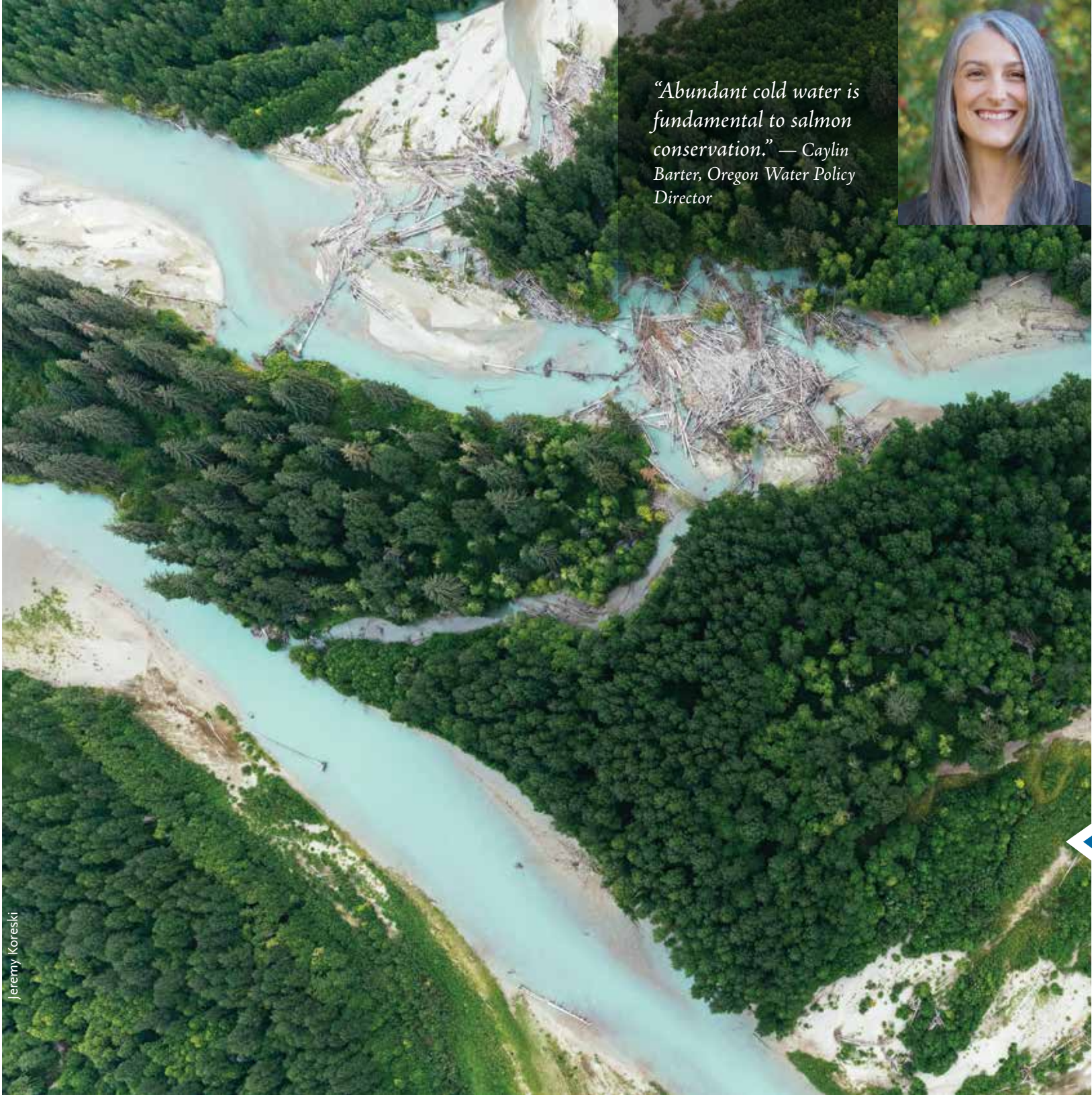
Now, public pressure to scale global action on climate change, matched by growing demand from many of the world's largest companies for carbon removal projects, is driving dynamic policy and market initiatives to sequester more carbon in forests and other ecosystems.

At Wild Salmon Center, we want to make sure that this rapidly emerging—and potentially robust—conservation opportunity is shaped by sound watershed science, while improving protections for wild salmon and the ecosystems that depend on them.

Over the next decade, WSC will be working with governments, companies, and philanthropic partners to jointly protect in-ground "irrecoverable" carbon and increase carbon stored across this landscape while also providing durable protection for salmon strongholds.



Jeremy Koreski



Jeremy Koreski

"Abundant cold water is fundamental to salmon conservation." — Caylin Barter, Oregon Water Policy Director



Ken Morrish

The winter climate in Portland, Oregon, is projected to be 6.6 degrees warmer and over 35 percent drier in 2080, on par with today's climate in Sacramento, California.

NOW / FUTURE

COP 26: Salmon on World Stage. In November 2021, Wild Salmon Center joined global salmon organizations to hang "Salmon School," a massive sculpture of glass salmon, at the COP 26 climate talks in Glasgow, Scotland. Despite shortcomings on emissions reduction commitments, COP 26 gave new recognition to nature's role in climate action, and committed new funds to nature-based solutions, including \$1.7 billion for Indigenous and local community stewardship efforts.



Carbon is key. Over the last 30 years, our conservation efforts have focused on the protection of watersheds that contain more than six billion tons of the planet's most significant carbon reserves.



Gov. Jay Inslee (WA) and Senator Jeff Merkley (OR) at COP 26.

Next: Funding the Future of Salmon Conservation

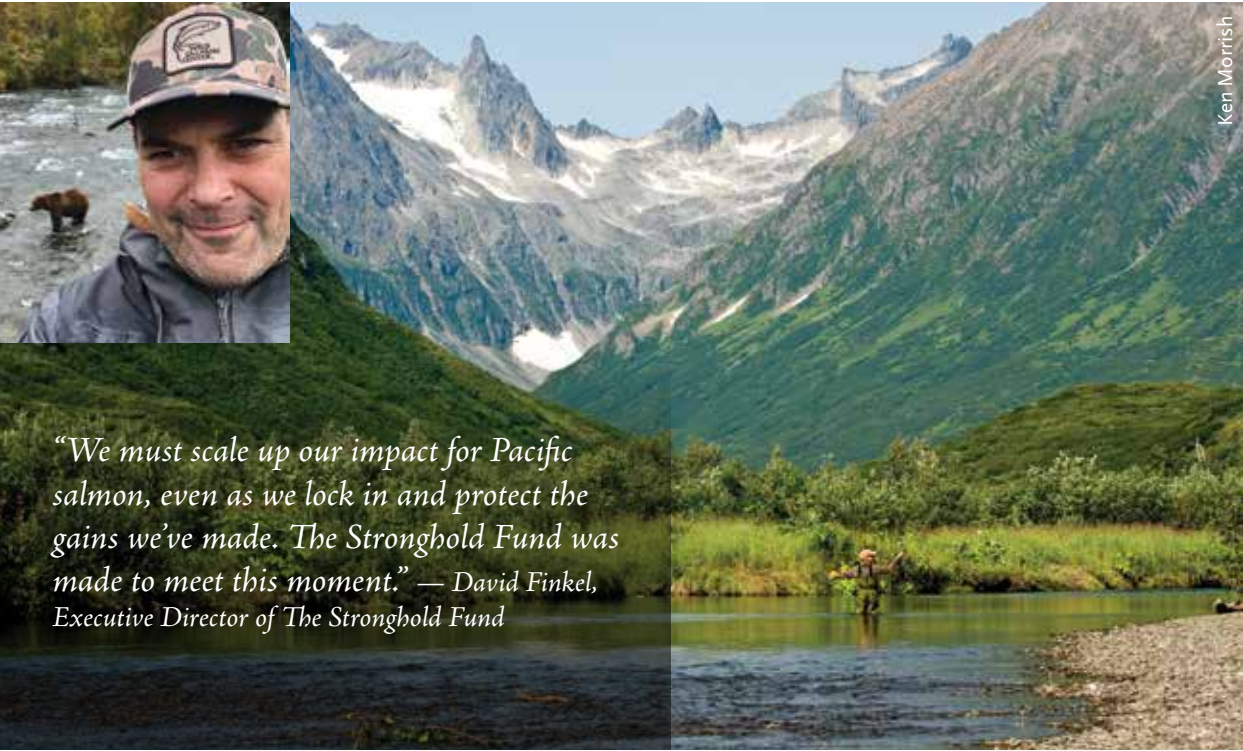
Over our 30-year history in salmon conservation, we've learned that it can take years, even decades, to build coalitions, win durable protections, and weather political headwinds.

But our experience has also taught us that sometimes, what's truly needed is the ability to act fast.

That's a primary reason we created The Stronghold Fund, Wild Salmon Center's first-of-its-kind impact fund for North Pacific salmon conservation, designed to quickly deploy resources when a strategic need or opportunity arises. In December 2021, the Fund reached its first capitalization goal of \$15 million. Now we're spending that money down to support critical initiatives like stopping Pebble Mine in Alaska, safeguarding salmon biodiversity on British Columbia's Central Coast, and protecting water flows in Oregon's stronghold rivers.

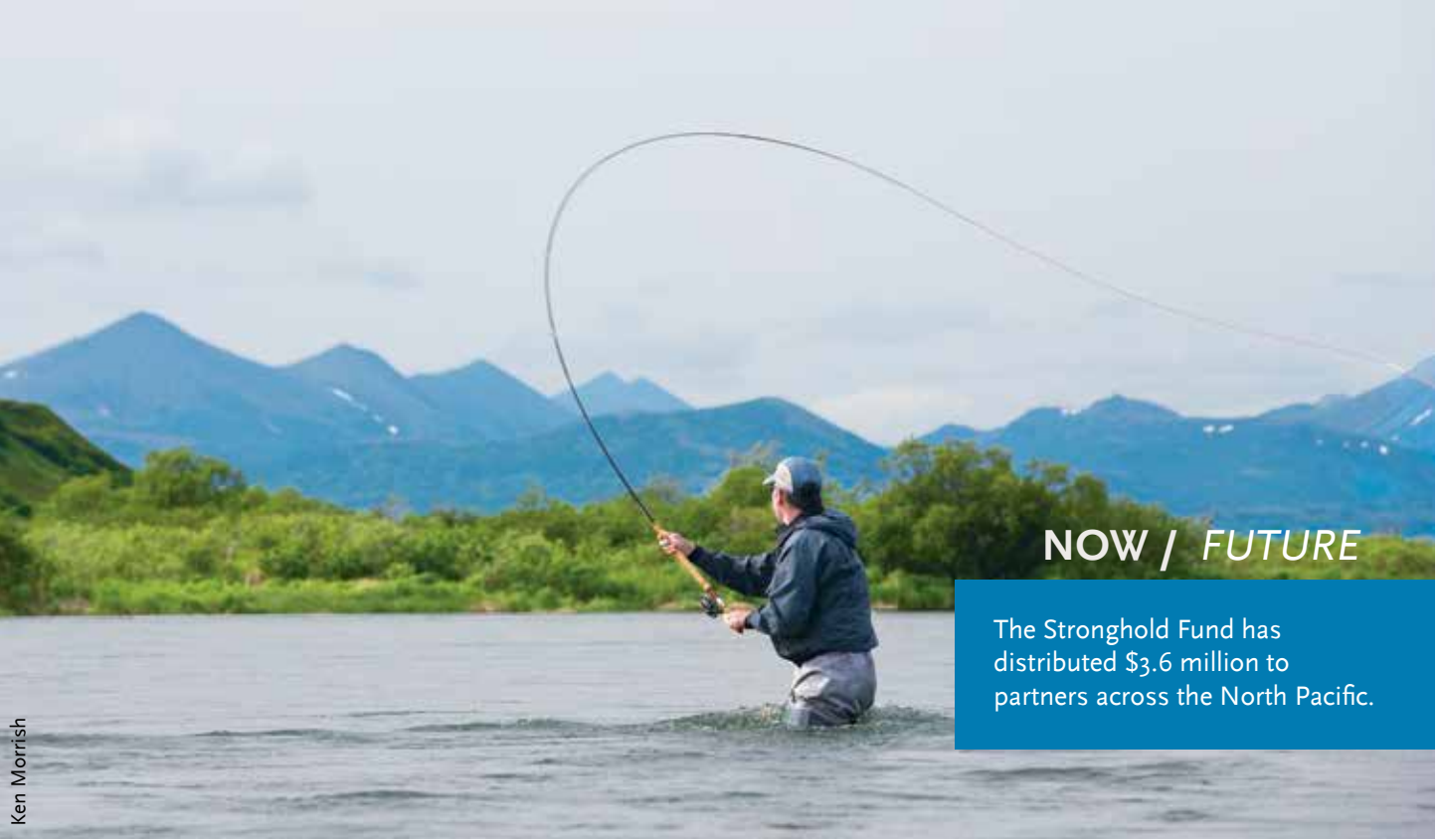
We're also looking to The Stronghold Fund to help us deliver the next generation of solutions to the challenges facing wild salmon and steelhead. The next 30 years will bring heightened threats from warming temperatures and resource extraction, as well as increasing demands for freshwater—along with other pressures on wild fish ecosystems. To answer these fast-evolving challenges, we'll need to build on our strengths, scale up our work, and accelerate conservation in stronghold watersheds around the North Pacific.

Meeting this moment will mean having ready resources and partnerships in place. Now, we're scaling up this model for the challenges ahead.



Long-term commitment to the permanent protection of Bristol Bay, Alaska. The multi-year campaign to block Pebble Mine and permanently safeguard Bristol Bay is a cornerstone initiative of The Stronghold Fund.

Conservation of the Skeena River in northern British Columbia. WSC is working with SkeenaWild and First Nation partners to permanently protect the Skeena estuary and rebuild the region's threatened wild fish runs.



Seed funding for the Oregon Water Program. This initiative is focused on limiting new water withdrawals from stronghold rivers, increasing instream flows in key watersheds, and amplifying voices that protect water in Oregon.



Defending B.C.'s wild salmon against harmful open net-pen fish farms. WSC has begun a new partnership with Watershed Watch Salmon Society to prevent Canada's federal government from renewing salmon farm licenses operating off the B.C. coast.

Conservation of the Dean River and Central Coast of British Columbia. WSC is working with Coastal Rivers Conservancy (a partner organization we helped found in 2019) and First Nations on a science-based initiative to reform commercial harvest and protect the region's wild fish.

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Thanks to the loyal support of our donors, we have been able to reach major conservation milestones this year and cap 30 years of leadership around the North Pacific.

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Kim Kosa (WSC), Marshall Gilchrist (Wallace Research Foundation), Amee Pacheco (WSC), Jess Helsley (WSC), Betsy Krier (WSC), Susan Cox, and Cathy Lehman (Harder Foundation) touring the Olympic Peninsula, Washington.



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Ratmir Timashev (left) with guide in Crystal Creek, Alaska.

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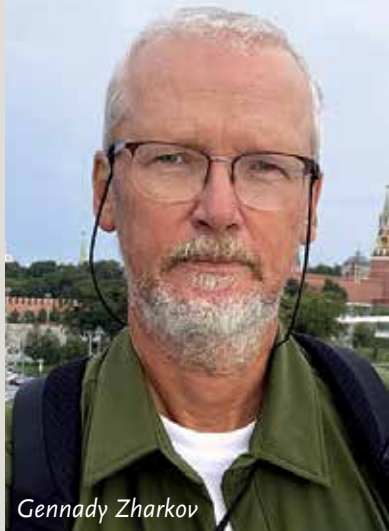
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Meet Our Newest Ambassadors

April Vokey is an FFF-certified casting instructor, a fly-tying instructor, and traveling speaker. In 2007, she founded her own guiding operation, Fly Gal Ventures. April's writing has appeared in *Fly Fisherman*, *Outside*, *Fly Rod & Reel*, and *Fly Fusion* magazines. She's been featured on the Outdoor Channel, 60 Minutes Sports, the Discovery Channel, WFN's Fly Nation TV, and even wrote and hosted her own series, ShoreLines with April Vokey, focusing on fly-fishing's rich history and diverse characters. Her podcast, Anchored with April Vokey, archives stories from fly-fishing's most influential people. For the last eight years, April has split her time between northern B.C. and Australia.

Gennady Zharkov has been involved in salmon ecology and the fishing industry his entire life: experience that has influenced his wholesale fishing gear and publishing businesses in Russia. The supervisory board chairman of the Russian Salmon Association, Gennady played a key role in developing a new Russian law that facilitates salmon conservation through catch-and-release sportfishing. He travels extensively in Russia and around the world—from Alaska and Siberia to Japan, from Tierra del Fuego and Western Europe to the Kola Peninsula. Closer to Moscow, he has been involved in the creation of a nature park aimed at preserving a unique population of European grayling.



WSC Ambassadors

Billy Blewett, British Columbia
Kate Crump, Oregon/Alaska
Jeff Hickman, Oregon/BC
Dan Michels, Alaska
Ken Morrish, Oregon
April Vokey, BC/Australia
Gennady Zharkov, Russia

Take the Next Step for Wild Salmon



Igor Shpilnenok

Hoping to have a lasting impact for wild salmon strongholds and the cold water, forests, and wildlife they support? Consider a bequest or other legacy gift to the Wild Salmon Center.

Making a legacy gift to WSC is a simple—but transformative—way you can help safeguard our most important wild salmon rivers today, tomorrow, and for generations to come.

There are many ways to start building your stronghold legacy, including:

- A simple bequest gift in your will
- Naming WSC as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy or retirement plan
- Making WSC the beneficiary of your Charitable Remainder Trust

We're available to work with you (or your advisors) to plan a gift that meets your vision for the future—and helps protect our most important wild salmon ecosystems for the benefit of our children and grandchildren.

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

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Quileute Tribe Natural Resources Department and the USGS gather on the banks of the Quillayute River as they prepare to gather water temperature data.

Brett Brownscombe, Michael Wade, Audie Paulus (WSC), Alie Kouzoukian (Conservation Alliance), and Caylin Barter (WSC) on a tour of the Tillamook State Forest, Oregon.



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Coast Salmon Partnership Executive Director Mara Zimmerman and WSC's Betsy Krier hiking along the Bogachiel River.



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Lynn Loacker and Guido Rahr on the Dean River, B.C.

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Governor Kate Brown (center) with signatories of the Oregon Private Forest Accord.

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WSC's Bob Van Dyk with Governor Kate Brown at the signing of the Oregon Private Forest Accord.



Andrea Lonas



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WSC staff and board on the Skeena River in Port Edward, British Columbia.

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WSC President Guido Rahr with Chairman of the Board Mitch Zuklie and guide Mike Van Wormer on the Skeena River, B.C.



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WSC's Will Atlas with Teddy Windsor, a Guardian Watchman with the Heiltsuk Nation, on Yeo Lake, B.C.

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Jack R. Polsky: A legacy of wild salmon science

When loved ones think of Jack Polsky, they remember his love of the outdoors, irreverent practical jokes, and fierce dedication to family and friends.

“Jack was devoted to our kids and wanted them to experience the magic he had felt growing up,” says his wife, Becca Schanberg. “He introduced them to everything in nature... including his love of fishing.”

After Jack passed away in July of 2021, his wife, three children, and other family and friends sought a way to remember him through a charitable gift that honored his insatiable curiosity and love of fish.

“To Jack, fishing was a source of calm—a way to spend time in beautiful places, and a moment when he could shut out the rest of the world and focus on one thing,” says Becca.

Jack’s brother, Charlie Polsky, suggested reaching out to a science-based fish conservation group he’d supported for many years: the Wild Salmon Center.

From there, Becca and others worked with WSC to establish the **Jack Polsky Conservation Research Fellowship**. Through an annual gift from the Polsky family, the Fellowship will provide ongoing support for early-in-career scientists conducting applied research that addresses the urgent challenges facing Pacific salmon.

“Jack’s fascination with nature taught me that we have so much to learn from animals,” says Becca. “We hope this fellowship will not only keep Jack’s curious spirit alive, but also have a positive impact on young scientists and salmon rivers for many years to come.” Read more about the Fellowship on page 20 and at wildsalmoncenter.org/polskyfellowship.

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Ekaterina Smonina (left), the head of Tugursky Village and leader of the Evenk people, with Mikhail Skopets on the Tugur River.

Bruce Ham (right) and guide on the Uda River.



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WSC’s Matt Sloat and Sergei Monahov gathering samples from Siberian taimen on the Tugur River.

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Jack Polsky Fellow Tasha Thompson collecting samples on the Umpqua River, Oregon.

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Alaskan rainbow trout.





Ken Morrish

Bulkley River, B.C.

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WSC’s David Finkel with an Arctic char, Bristol Bay, Alaska.

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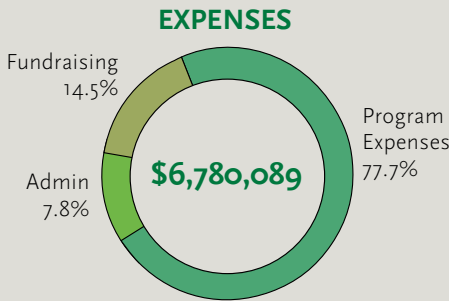
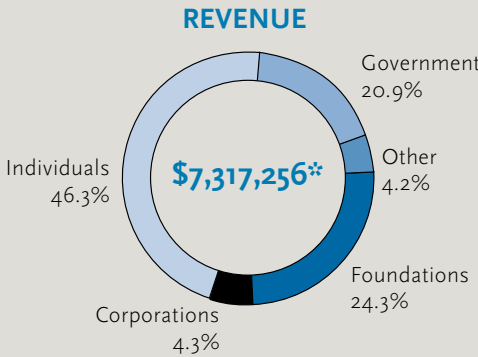
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FINANCIAL STATEMENT
For the fiscal year of 2021



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



Wild Salmon Center has received the highest rating for sound fiscal management from [Charity Navigator](#).

Wild Salmon Center has received the [GuideStar gold seal](#) for transparency.



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



WSC has been approved to receive grants through the [One Percent for the Planet](#) program.



Alamy



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Front cover: Knutson Creek, Iliamna Lake, Bristol Bay (Jason Ching). Back cover: Alaska salmon (Paul Souders, Getty Images).



Thank you to our outgoing Executive Vice President Sara LaBorde, who served WSC for 10 years and leaves a long list of accomplishments.



WSC staff at the signing of the Oregon Private Forest Accord. Left to right: Jody Creasman, Amee Pacheco, Lori Howk, Bob Van Dyk, Caylin Barter, Audie Paulus, Nancy Slavin, Oakley Brooks.

WSC staff enjoying a Skeena River outing. From left: Kim Kosa, Emily Anderson, Tiffany Cooper, Julia Hill (SkeenaWild), Kathy Holler, Jess Helsley.



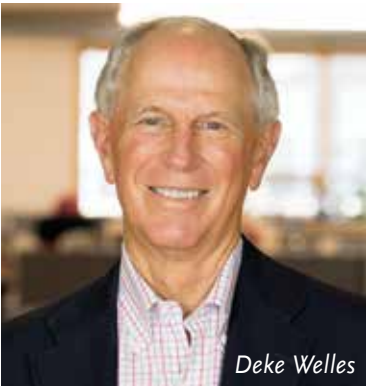
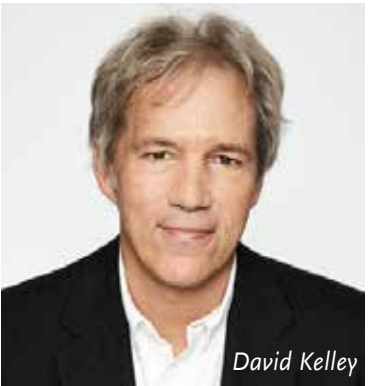
Board of Directors

Welcome board member David E. Kelley. Writer/producer and fly fisher David E. Kelley is the mind behind some of America's most groundbreaking television dramas, including the Emmy, Peabody, and Golden Globe Award-winning shows "Big Little Lies," "Boston Legal," and "Ally McBeal." Kelley's interest in wild fish conservation led him to found the sustainable aquaculture company Riverence, with 14 land-based trout and trout-egg farms across Idaho and Washington.

Honoring David "Deke" Welles and our outgoing directors. In 2020, we welcomed four new directors to our board. Now we honor six outgoing directors, including board chair David "Deke" Welles (2014-2022).

"Deke Welles did a tremendous job as chair," says WSC President & CEO Guido Rahr. "Deke drew on his excellent leadership skills, judgment, and experience to lead us through a period of growth and expansion, including the launch of the Stronghold Fund, that set the stage for major conservation opportunities and achievements."

In addition to his WSC board leadership, Deke has served as a trustee of the Wetlands America Trust, member of the Winous Point Shooting Club of Port Clinton, Ohio, president of the Winous Point Marsh Conservancy and Waterhen Lodge duck club in Manitoba, advisor to the Black Swamp Conservancy, and member of the Castalia Trout Club and the Anglers' Club of New York.



We are also deeply grateful for the service of directors John "Rocky" Dixon (2014-2022), Tom Hansen (2019-2021), Dr. Randall Peterman (2013-2021), Fraser Rieche (2013-2021), and Ilya Sherbovich (2014-2022). Your guidance has been key to WSC's ability to adapt and thrive in these challenging times.

Pictured left to right: (top row) Guido Rahr, David Finkel, John Childs, Rick Halford; (bottom row) Mariusz Wroblewski, Ray Lane, Mary Ruckelshaus, Mitch Zuklie.

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