

IN REMEMBRANCE: John Dale

For five decades, John Dale was a leading figure in investment finance. He was the originator of the “Growth Equity” investment style in 1983, and later the founding partner of Peregrine Capital Management. But Dale, who passed away in July 2024 at the age of 78, also left an indelible mark on the world of wild fish and waterfowl conservation.

“John truly was passionate about habitat in both words and deeds,” says Deke Welles, a Wild Salmon Center board member from 2013 to 2022 and a longtime friend of Dale’s.

A passionate fly fisher and duck hunter, Dale joined the Wild Salmon Center community in 2006 with a small donation. Over the next 18 years, his commitment to salmon conservation grew steadily, culminating with a generous bequest to Wild Salmon Center in his will. Such unstinting support was a hallmark of Dale’s character, Welles says.

“He was an exceedingly generous man,” Welles remembers. “We are the beneficiaries of his advocacy.”

During a hunting trip with Dale in Canada, Wild Salmon Center President and CEO Guido Rahr was struck by the



Frank Rohwer

WSC Stronghold Fund supporter John Dale

gravity with which this well-traveled sportsman considered the big questions of conservation.

“John took the protection of rivers and wetlands as seriously as he took fly fishing and waterfowl hunting,” Rahr says. “It’s to leaders like John that we can often trace back some of our biggest conservation wins.”



Building conservation power in British Columbia

Jeremy Koreski



Dee Browning / Alamy

Plant a seed for the future

Spring is the perfect time to take stock, set new goals, and prepare for the year ahead.

If one of the items on your “to-do” list is writing or updating your will, we hope you’ll consider including Wild Salmon Center—and the protection of salmon strongholds—in your plans for the future.

For over 30 years, WSC has successfully conserved the North Pacific’s most exceptional salmon, steelhead, and trout rivers—protecting more than 35 million acres of key habitat and defending these extraordinary watersheds from mines, dams, and other large-scale development projects. But our work is far from finished.

Today, we invite you to leave a lasting legacy of thriving stronghold rivers by considering a bequest to WSC in your will or living trust. Your legacy gift to WSC will ensure your loved ones and future generations know the joy of wading in cold, clean rivers, exploring old-growth forests, and watching wild fish head upstream.

To learn more, contact Kim Kosa at 971-255-5562 or visit wildsalmoncenter.org/legacy.



Greg Knox, courtesy SkeenaWild

Wild Salmon Center’s new B.C. Director aims to scale conservation work across the province.

In January 2025, Wild Salmon Center hired Greg Knox as our British Columbia Director: a new position within our team of Pacific salmon policy and restoration experts. In the months since, Knox—formerly SkeenaWild Conservation Trust’s long-serving Executive Director—has traveled the province, meeting with partners to hone his vision.

The timing for this new role is fortuitous, he says. The coming months and years could bring big challenges to salmon and steelhead conservation in B.C.—but also powerful opportunities. Key among the latter, Knox says, is the opportunity to build a shared base of power among conservation leaders across the province.

“There are collaborations happening in B.C. to protect salmon and steelhead,” Knox says. “But there hasn’t been one organization dedicated to understanding the needs of groups across the region.” [Read on for how Knox plans to “raise all boats.”](#)



Dave Herasimtschuk

U.S. federal outlook: What’s at stake

A note from Wild Salmon Center President and CEO Guido Rahr

These have been turbulent months since the change in administration in Washington, D.C. Funding freezes, staffing cuts, and policy whiplash have hit federal agencies managing public lands, fish, and wildlife. These changes threaten our work.

Continued on page 3.

IN THIS ISSUE

- British Columbia Director
 - Salmon Vision expansion
 - Save the West Su update
 - U.S. federal outlook
 - Mongolia exchange
 - Conversation with Dr. Jonathan Armstrong
 - Pacific Northwest restoration
 - Hope for endangered Oregon coho
 - WSC staff updates
- ALSO: Remembering John Dale

B.C. continued



Skeena Basin

Pam Mullins / SkeenaWild

Wild Salmon Center: *You led SkeenaWild for 18 years. What does it mean to shift focus to a whole province?*

Greg Knox: This position, and what it says about Wild Salmon Center's commitment to British Columbia and its partners here—it's just really timely. We're entering volatile times, and Wild Salmon Center can help ensure that the critical work being done in the province can continue. Our goal is to raise all boats—to bring more resources to B.C. at a time when it's more needed than ever.

I understand that people are putting a lot of faith in me and I'm up to the challenge. But it's not going to be easy.

What challenges are you anticipating?

Right now, federal politics both in Canada and south of the border are bringing a lot of uncertainty to our work. And there are more challenges on the horizon. In B.C., our recently reelected provincial government has committed to protecting salmon and protected areas. Specifically, it has recommitted to protecting 30 percent of the province by 2030. And yet, it also seems to be refocusing efforts more on the economy—and less on salmon and their habitat.

Where do you see opportunities, given the challenges?

We can hold the B.C. government to its 30 by 30 commitment by creating new protected areas in places like the Skeena, Nass, and Central Coast. We can work on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border to strengthen the Pacific Salmon Treaty. And we can help expand Indigenous-led land use planning.

First Nations are leading the way in protecting salmon and steelhead habitat. It's not just land use. They're doing innovative work in selective fisheries, artificial intelligence, and genetics. But there's not a lot of opportunity for these communities to talk to each other, regionally or internationally. That's where a group that can play a convenor role, like Wild Salmon Center, could be really helpful. A united front will be key to conservation gains both in Canada and elsewhere in North America.

Read the full interview at wildsalmoncenter.org/news.

"A united front will be key to conservation gains both in Canada and elsewhere in North America."

Greg Knox, British Columbia Director



Don Johnston / Alamy

Bears feeding on salmon, Chilcotin Wilderness, B.C.

Right now, we don't know how many wild salmon return to key rivers until their migrations are over. To manage salmon in an unpredictable world—balancing jobs, food production, and conservation—we need data while fish are still swimming, in rivers both accessible and remote.

Enter Salmon Vision: a new artificial intelligence tool to identify and count salmon in real time. Since 2020, Wild Salmon Center has worked with First Nations, the Pacific Salmon Foundation, and Simon Fraser University to develop this software and deploy it into rivers via weirs, a fishing gear type that dates back millennia.

In British Columbia, Salmon Vision is already informing fishery management decisions and empowering Indigenous communities with quality data. Now, it's time to take Salmon Vision worldwide. By 2030, we aim to have AI-powered salmon conservation tools in 100 watersheds. Learn more at salmonvision.org.

SALMON VISION

Ancient fishing technology, meet artificial intelligence

COHO 2 (MANUAL)
Sex: Female
Adipose Clipped: Yes
Injury: No
Confidence Level: 3
Notes: NA



Continued

WHAT'S AT STAKE: U.S. federal outlook

These changes have prompted Canadian conglomerate Northern Dynasty to tell its shareholders that Pebble Mine is not dead. They endanger recently-won protections for 28 million acres of federal BLM land in Alaska—including 1.5 million acres in Bristol Bay, where Pebble would be built—along with federal approval of a 50-year Oregon conservation agreement that includes habitat protections within 10 million acres of private forestland. Millions of dollars in Pacific Northwest restoration funding are in limbo, jeopardizing vital progress in coho salmon recovery.

These threats are real, but we will work hard to not lose ground. We are engaging with the Trump Administration, as we have with every U.S. administration in our 30-year history. We are engaging, too, with the leadership of conservation groups across America. These are early days, and there will be more to report. In the meantime, thank you for standing with us. *Guido Rahr*

SCIENCE SPOTLIGHT: Alaska research

One watershed east of Alaska's Copper River, the tributaries of Controller Bay have rarely been inventoried for salmon.

"Controller Bay and the Bering River District are critical parts of the fabled Copper River salmon fishery," says Wild Salmon Center Science Director Dr. Matthew Sloat. "But their fish populations have almost never been surveyed."

That means we could easily damage this critical fishery through poor land use planning. So last year, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation awarded Wild Salmon Center a summer 2025 research grant to fix this data gap. Our information will help the U.S. Forest Service assess where potential new oil and gas leases overlap with salmon habitat. It could also aid fisheries management decisions by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game here and in the Copper.

"These are some of Alaska's most remote and resource-rich areas," Dr. Sloat says. "To make sure these resources last, a critical first step is understanding what waters are feeding this fishery."



Alamy



Defending the wild West Susitna

Tim Plowden / Alamy

Alaskans know the West Susitna region is special: a wild, roadless wonderland and a global salmon stronghold, home to all five species of salmon found in the state.

"Alaskans love the West Su," says Wild Salmon Center Alaska Director Emily Anderson. "There aren't many places where you can live in a city with such incredible access to the backcountry."

"Alaskans love the West Su. There aren't many places with such incredible access to the backcountry." Emily Anderson, Alaska Director

That uniqueness is why Alaskans said no to past projects that put this area at risk. And it's why they're now saying no to the West Susitna Industrial Access Road. Since 2014, the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority has pushed for this 100-mile road—one that would crosscut and damage at least 83 free-flowing salmon streams and cost at least \$600 million in public funding, all to the benefit of speculative mining companies.

"The West Su is one of the most visited areas in the state," Anderson says. "Tourism here supports hundreds of small businesses and thousands of jobs. This road risks all that, and puts Alaskans on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars."

Alaskans can't afford to waste these public funds, Anderson says—especially when they're sorely needed for essential services like education. And yet, some are still advancing this project, and not always through direct means. In July 2024, the Alaska Department of Transportation launched what it said was an unrelated 22-mile "recreation" road—albeit one that ends exactly where the industrial road begins. Local business leaders called out the deception, and when the road's initial environmental review opened to the public, thousands of our supporters spoke out.

This year, DOT and others will try to advance this project. We'll hold them accountable—alongside Alaska business owners, Tribes, hunters, anglers, mushers, and outdoor enthusiasts. Stay updated at westsuwild.org.



As dams come down in the West, Mongolian scientists take note

On a crisp October morning on Northern California's Klamath River, eight Mongolians peered over a ridgetop platform, taking in the spectacular view.

Far below the delegation members—experts in aquatic ecosystems, biology, chemistry, and construction engineering—a river arc flowed freely through a gentle gorge. Just months ago, the floor of this gorge had been 200 feet underwater.

It was a vista made possible by the absence of the 60-year-old Iron Gate Dam. The massive earthen wall once generated hydropower for thousands of households. But by the turn of the 21st century, Iron Gate—like three even older dams immediately upstream—produced little energy. For these dams to stay in place, their private owners needed to invest in costly modern upgrades, including fish passage. And so, starting in 2023, Iron Gate and its upriver counterparts came down in the largest dam removal in history.

With Iron Gate's reservoir gone, the Mongolians could again see its namesake rock flanges on either side of the riverbanks. Sweeping up those banks, native seedlings were taking root: willow and lupine, oaks and yarrow.

The Mongolian experts were here to ask big questions. As guests of a knowledge exchange hosted by Wild Salmon Center's International Taimen Initiative, their visit aimed to advance global dialogue on how best to protect taimen, the world's largest salmonids.



California's Klamath River, undammed



Siberian taimen

Mongolia River Outfitters

Mongolia is home to some of the world's most pristine and productive rivers for Siberian taimen, an IUCN red-listed species that scientists still struggle to understand. But the nation is also looking for ways to sustainably develop domestic energy production. That drive for energy means that some of Mongolia's most iconic remaining taimen rivers are also being scoped for new hydropower dams and water storage infrastructure.

Which is why, this October morning, delegation members wanted to see firsthand what it looks like to dam—and undam—a salmon river. As one visiting scientist explained: "We have to inform the decision makers."

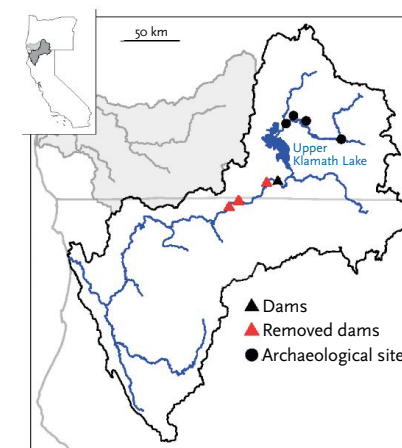
For Wild Salmon Center Senior Mongolia Consultant Dr. Saulyegul Avlyush, wild fish conservation is a thread linking East and West. Like Klamath salmon, taimen are long-distance travelers. And also like Klamath salmon, they rely on a wide range of habitats.

"For taimen, I see parallels with Klamath salmon."
Dr. Saulyegul Avlyush, Senior Mongolia Consultant

"Siberian taimen likely make use of everything from headwaters and tributaries to large mainstem rivers, where they can hold in deep pools during iced-over winter months," Dr. Avlyush says. "For taimen, I see parallels with Klamath salmon. It's interesting for us to see how fish here used these systems before the dams, and how things changed when the dams went in."

Dr. Avlyush notes that time has brought improvements to hydropower, from more ecologically-informed project siting to better fish passage. But she also hopes that she and her colleagues can bring more focus to the welfare of species like taimen, as well as Mongolia's nascent ecotourism industry.

Wild Salmon Center's stronghold strategy holds that where salmon rivers are still healthy and intact, we must protect them as they are, before we lose ground. But across the West, many salmon rivers lost ground to development long ago. Direct intervention—habitat restoration and dam removal, for example—become necessary tools for salmon recovery. Profoundly altered rivers like the Klamath offer a powerful case study.



Above the dams on the lower Klamath River, WSC scientists discovered DNA presence of both spring and fall Chinook bones at archaeological sites 5,000 years old to the 1860s. Graph courtesy Dr. Tasha Thompson.

For thousands of years—up until roughly the time of dam construction on the Klamath mainstem—salmon traveled hundreds of miles to spawn above the Klamath mainstem in lake headwater rivers like the Wood and Sprague. In 2017, Wild Salmon Center scientists and others used DNA to confirm that spring and fall Chinook salmon made use of this historic habitat.

Even with the Klamath dams gone, there's no guarantee salmon will find their way back to the upper Klamath's cold, clean tributaries. This basin remains profoundly changed. Above the 38-mile former reservoir chain, the Keno and Link River dams remain just below Klamath Lake—their fish passage systems to date untested by salmon.

But now, at least, that full journey is possible.

That October morning on the viewing platform, news spread fast that Chinook salmon had been spotted above the Iron Gate site—possibly the first in many decades. In the coming



Mongolian Exchange participants

weeks, salmon were confirmed above all four former dam sites, and even spawning in Oregon's Spencer Creek.

"It's a good reminder to keep the needs of fish in mind from the beginning. That's just one lesson we can take back home." Dr. Saulyegul Avlyush

"It's exciting to think that salmon could make it back to places like the Wood River," Dr. Avlyush says. "But it's also a good reminder for Mongolia to keep the needs of fish in mind from the very beginning when we consider development projects. That's just one lesson we can take back home." Visit wildsalmoncenter.org/mongolia for more about the International Taimen Initiative.

Dr. Jonathan Armstrong bets on the Klamath River

The race is on to predict the future's best salmon rivers. By "best" rivers, some scientists mean the coldest. Dr. Jonathan Armstrong has a different take.



Dr. Jonathan Armstrong on the Wood River

"When we talk about the future, we often end up trying to pick winners and losers," says the Wild Salmon Center Science Advisor and Oregon State University ecology professor. "But that's a pretty harsh zero-sum game."

To maximize fishing opportunities in a warmer world, Dr. Armstrong says we shouldn't overlook places some might call the "losers"—places like the vast Klamath Basin on the Oregon-California border, a centerpiece of his research for the past decade.

"Klamath Lake can get to almost 80 degrees in the summer," Dr. Armstrong says. "Yet it still provides the vast majority of annual growth for migratory redband trout and the fisheries that target them."

With the largest dam removal in history now complete on the lower Klamath, it's possible that salmon might soon test their luck alongside these resilient resident trout.

"Being climate smart is not as simple as identifying places that have worse climate stressors and writing them off," Dr. Armstrong says. "That's actually really good news. It means these areas can still contribute."

Visit wildsalmoncenter.org/news for our full conversation with Dr. Armstrong.



Courtesy Gustav Hellström

Meet James Losee, our new Senior Wild Fish Manager

James Losee knows what it's like to work as a fisheries manager: walls of meetings, emergency decisions, not enough time in the day to find new tools to support your team.

"I've been in situations where someone has shared a big idea with me," Losee says. "And I've thought, I wish I just had an extra hour to check it out."

In fall 2024, he joined Wild Salmon Center as our Senior Wild Fish Manager for Washington State. For Losee, this role follows a 25-year career in fisheries management—both at federal agencies like NOAA and with the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, where he nurtured critical relationships with Tribal fisheries managers, sport fishers, and others impacted by agency policy.

In 2020, for example, Losee led a WDFW decision to reduce angling pressure on steelhead by suspending, for a season,

the practice of sportfishing from a boat. The move—an urgent attempt to reduce wild steelhead mortality but keep fishers on the water—represents the hard decisions fisheries managers face in addressing steep declines in Olympic Peninsula steelhead: 55 percent since the 1950s.

Losee's new role is no less ambitious. To reverse the alarming trajectory of Washington steelhead and salmon through science and policy, he'll step in when his former government colleagues might not have time or resources. The stakes are high, with both Olympic Peninsula steelhead and Chinook now petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

"At WDFW, I saw how effective Wild Salmon Center is at improving habitat and water quality for wild fish," Losee says. "As part of this team, my ultimate hope is that we can also get more managers focused on a long-term vision for our shared fisheries."

"My hope is that we can get more managers focused on a long-term vision for our fisheries."

James Losee, Washington Senior Wild Fish Manager

Losee says he's ready to explore new strategies with Tribal, state, and federal fisheries managers. As a leading anadromous trout expert and an author of more than 40 peer-reviewed papers, he brings expertise that informed WDFW's embrace of more proactive salmonid protections.

"James achieved huge conservation wins for salmon and steelhead in his past roles with WDFW and NOAA," says Wild Salmon Center Restoration Director Jess Helsley. "We're thrilled to leverage his expertise in Washington and beyond."

Program Manager Betsy Krier oversaw massive excavators that moved mattress-size aluminum plates into place in this Sol Duc River tributary—pieces then expertly assembled by construction professionals.

On September 20, right on time, crews wrapped up work in this key salmon stream in the Quillayute Basin. The sight of Anton Creek flowing free made Krier a bit misty-eyed.

"The creek's rusty old pipes blocked fish from some truly excellent upstream habitat," Krier says. "Now fish can get upstream all year—and won't even know they're going under a road."

Within days of project completion, Krier spotted lamprey passing through the culvert. And with fall rains came coho.

"Problematic fish barriers aren't just problems for salmon," Krier says. "The Olympic Peninsula has thousands of aging, undersized culverts, which bring road washouts, flood damage, and more headaches for folks. Both people and fish need long-term solutions like this."

In Washington, better passage for people and salmon

It's one thing to see the specs for Anton Creek's new culvert. At 72 feet long, this road-spanning structure is sized for the flood events of the future. But what really impresses is watching this thoroughfare come together.

The project broke ground this summer, thanks to funding from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, NOAA, and Washington State. For weeks, Wild Salmon Center Habitat



WSC

In Oregon, hope for endangered coho

Most salmon runs are struggling at the southern end of their range. But some Oregon coho rivers are bucking that trend—and Wild Salmon Center Senior Habitat Restoration Manager Dr. Tim Elder thinks he knows why.

"We don't think it's a coincidence that coho are doing better in watersheds where Wild Salmon Center, our local partners, and federal agencies like NOAA are taking a whole-watershed approach to habitat restoration," Dr. Elder says.

Recent NOAA reports show signs of recovery for coho runs in a handful of rivers, including the Elk, Rogue, and Nehalem—all watersheds where WSC and our partners have made deep investments in targeted, science-driven plans to improve habitat and fish passage.

"There are a lot of factors out there that we can't control," Dr. Elder says. "But access to quality habitat is something

OR & WA coastal restoration in 2024:

29 projects creating coastal jobs in Oregon and Washington	790 acres of wetland, instream, and riparian restoration	38 river miles reconnected for salmon and steelhead
--	--	---



Paul Jeffrey

we absolutely can fix for salmon. And as NOAA's latest reports show, this work is making a difference."

"Coho are doing better in watersheds where we're taking a whole-watershed approach to habitat restoration."

Dr. Tim Elder, Senior Habitat Restoration Manager

Since 2017, the WSC-led Coast Coho Partnership has launched work on 11 strategic action plans, to date, for Oregon coho strongholds. The Elk is the very first basin where we went to work—with positive results for coho soon following. Now, Dr. Elder says, it's time to take this proven approach to more salmon rivers.

"As NOAA's own reports make clear, salmon recovery won't happen without more restoration," he says. "We know our approach works for salmon. It's time to scale it up."



Welcome, new WSC staffers

(L-R): Dr. Saulyegul Avlyush, Senior Mongolia Consultant; Pic Walker, Strategic Partnerships; Jules Ohman, Development Assistant; Kirk Blaine, Oregon Senior Wild Fish Manager; Annie Kleffner, Office Administrator; Luke Brockman, Alaska Community Outreach Coordinator; James Losee, Washington Senior Wild Fish Manager (page 6); and Greg Knox, British Columbia Director (cover, page 2).

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: *haich ikt'at'u*

Three miles east of Florence on Oregon's Siuslaw River, a transformation is taking place at haich ikt'at'u ("heart of the river"), formerly Waite Ranch. The Wild Salmon Center-led Coast Coho Partnership and McKenzie River Trust are fully restoring the 217-acre property with its future owners: the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, for whom this site holds deep cultural and historic value. wildsalmoncenter.org/campaigns/coastal-restoration



Restoring tidal wetlands and marshes at a former Siuslaw River ranch

Holden Films