



# BUILDING THE GROUNDSWELL FOR WILD REVIVAL IN 2019



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ON THE SKEENA RIVER, B.C.

SCOTT DAM, READY TO HELP REVIVE THE UPPER EEL WITH FUTURE DAM REMOVAL



# We are building a groundswell for the revival of abundant wild fish

MARK SHERWOOD ON NATIVE FISH SOCIETY'S PURPOSE

We are keepers of the wild. We are people taking action on behalf of fish, their homewaters, and our communities. We understand that wild, native fish are uniquely intertwined in a natural relationship with people and wildlife. Their wellbeing and success affect us all.

In this annual report, you will find the collective work of people across the Pacific Northwest who are in the ardent pursuit of reviving abundant wild fish. Native Fish Society's powerful network of 75 grassroots River Stewards has been strengthened by our skillful band of volunteer Native Fish Fellows. To welcome new perspectives and passion, our Women for Wild Fish Initiative encourages and supports women who are joining together as advocates, activists, and leaders in the recovery of wild, native fish.

Collectively, this network of volunteers, along with our dedicated staff, advance science-based solutions with the long term dedication that only comes from a strong connection to place. What sets Native Fish Society apart is our keen focus on reviving the Pacific Northwest's wild, native fish, and you, our community of supporters, volunteers, and donors who share our vision.

We hold the utmost gratitude for your commitment and generosity. Just as every river is the sum of its tributaries, our work is the sum of every hour you volunteered and every dollar you donated. We are the growing groundswell to bring about wild revival in the Pacific Northwest. We hope you enjoy this reflection on our work in 2019 and join us in the work ahead. See you on the river.

Wild matters.

Mark Sherwood, Executive Director

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# Turning Science Into Action Builds A Groundswell For Wild Revival

A Spring Chinook Salmon is a miraculous fish. These kings of king salmon return to their homewaters in spring (hence their name) and ride the final high flows of the rainy season to deep emerald pools where they rest for months and slowly ripen for their fall spawning season. Perhaps even more miraculous, the latest research suggests that the unique genetic adaptation that triggers the Spring Chinook Salmon's early return to freshwater happened only once in history - some two million years ago. For Spring Chinook Salmon on the Oregon Coast, this emerging scientific fact could finally mean a change in fishery and land management that has nearly erased them from the landscape.

And this is where your support made a difference. New research brings new understanding. But it's your generosity that empowers our staff and volunteers to put that understanding into action through advocacy.

With the steady encouragement of South Umpqua River Steward Stan Petrowski, who watches over one of Oregon's most imperiled Spring Chinook Salmon runs, Native Fish Society staff, volunteer Native Fish Fellows Chris Frissell and Dana Sheedy, and our partners at the Center for Biological Diversity, began work in late 2017 on a petition to safeguard Oregon Coast Spring Chinook under the Endangered Species Act. Over nearly two years, this team reviewed historical documents, cannery catch records, old state fishery conservation plans, and the latest science to piece together the fading picture of Spring Chinook Salmon on the Oregon Coast. What did we learn? In 1900, Spring Chinook Salmon returned to every major coastal river with an estuary. In 1991, a Coastal Chinook Management Plan acknowledged eleven populations along the Oregon Coast. In a 1998 status review, that number was reduced to nine basins. By 2014, the Coastal Management Plan only indicated three populations in two rivers. Spring Chinook Salmon are disappearing from the landscape.

In September of 2019, our coalition submitted the finished petition to the National Marine Fisheries Service. In early 2020, we received notice that the petition passed the initial finding stage and the agencies are now conducting a full status review of Oregon Coastal Spring Chinook Salmon. Thanks to your generosity, we're giving these fish a voice and working toward their restoration.



#### Sharing Knowledge Builds A Groundswell For Wild Revival

Since our founding, Native Fish Society's work has started new conversations. It's in our organizational DNA to highlight the most pressing issues facing wild fish and to make these issues priorities for the public and public agencies. One conversation that is essential to reviving abundant wild fish is facing head on the illusion that hatcheries can replace wild salmon and their ecosystems. For nearly three decades, the challenges that hatchery fish pose to wild fish populations have sparked debate and conversations among a small knit community of mostly white anglers, scientists, fishery managers, and tribal nations. Our goal in 2019 was to expand this conversation to include community members that have been paying for hatchery programs and have been impacted by the loss of wild salmon but have long been left outside of the conversation.

Four tools were developed in partnership with Native Fish Society volunteers, staff, and supporters to help bring more people into the conversation about the plight of wild fish and hatcheries.

First, environmental business leader Patagonia, thanks in large part to Ambassador Dylan Tomine and founder Yvon Chouinard, developed a feature length film, *Artifishal*, which premiered in Portland, OR on April 10, 2019. Over the course of the spring, summer, and fall tens of thousands of people attended community screenings of the film across the country, many of which were hosted by River Stewards, including Chris Daughters in Eugene, OR. One of the most memorable screenings was hosted by Oregon State Representative Ken Helm in the Oregon State Capital Building at the encouragement of NFS staff. After the film, community discussions opened up new understanding for the challenges facing wild fish and the hatchery approach to fisheries management. Since the release of the full-length documentary on YouTube, over 2.7 million people have viewed the film. We cannot thank Patagonia, Yvon, Dylan, and the Film's Director, Josh Murphy, enough for their commitment to reviving abundant wild fish and using their resources to tell the environmental stories that inspire, educate, and push for change.

Second, to compliment the film's information, Native Fish Fellows Ed Hepp and Chris Frissell and partner Brett Tallman, put together four print handouts, collectively known as our "Hatchery Handouts." These handouts detail the differences between wild and hatchery fish, why hatcheries exist, and a vision for wild revival. Every film screening and tabling opportunity NFS participated in during 2019 featured these tools to guide conversations and build relationships.

Third, Native Fish Fellow, John Zemrose, used his data science skills to convert six billion cells of data into our Northwest Hatchery Dashboard - a publicly available online data visualization tool, which allows the user to easily view and access all of the information about hatchery releases in the Pacific Northwest from the 1970s to present day. The dashboard is a vital tool for grounding conversations about hatcheries in the history and footprint of these programs.

Fourth, Native Fish Society Legislative Advocate, Jonathan Manton, and Conservation Director, Jennifer Fairbrother, developed a series of memos regarding Oregon's hatchery programs for Oregon State Representatives and Senators. These memos laid the groundwork for conversations with decision makers regarding the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's interest in taking over the aging Leaburg Hatchery on the McKenzie River. Ultimately, in a last minute deal without any public comment, the hatchery received ongoing temporary funding for the next two years, but we were closer than ever to shuttering a deadbeat hatchery program through a concerted legislative campaign. And we will not give up!

Your support and direct participation in this work made our huge strides forward sharing knowledge about wild revival possible!

#### Supporting Diverse Voices Builds A Groundswell For Wild Revival

Dr. Jane Goodall said, "one individual cannot possibly make a difference, alone. It is individual efforts, collectively, that makes a noticeable difference—all the difference in the world!" We've taken this wisdom to heart. In 2019, we put our Organizational Equity Strategy into action. The goal of this Strategy is to create a more welcoming, just, and diverse community at the Native Fish Society. We believe that our organizational vision for reviving abundant wild fish, free-flowing rivers, and thriving local communities becomes most resonant and most possible when we include many voices.

Led by Operations Manager Tracy Buckner, our circle of Women for Wild Fish expanded in 2019 thanks to the help of our River Steward and Native Fish Fellow volunteers, NFS members, and staff members Jennifer Fairbrother and J. Michelle Swope. Highlights included a great presentation by our friend Mara Zimmerman during the River Steward Gathering in Forks, Washington. J. Michelle and Tracy also hosted a Hops & Hackles for Wild Fish event in Olympia, WA. Through our Women for Wild Fish social media handle, hundreds of women engaged in film screenings of *Artifishal* and took action on issues such as protecting Spring Chinook Salmon in the Klamath River in California, advocating for a sustainable wild Winter Steelhead fishery in southwestern Oregon, and for the protection of critical salmon habitat from suction dredge mining in Washington.

Staff reimagined our Fall Volunteer Gathering by opening it up to everyone in our community, including members, partner organizations, and friends. We enjoyed a long weekend on the North Umpqua River's famous ballfield near Steamboat Creek. Together we shared presentations, experiences, tips, and knowledge from conservation campaigns past, present, and future. This work builds the capacity of our community as an effective grassroots environmental movement. Highlights included presentations from our partners at WaterWatch of Oregon regarding our shared effort to improve fish passage at the failing Winchester Dam.

Staff and volunteers are also building relationships with the Tribal Nations and indigenous peoples living and working in the watersheds where we're engaged. Reflecting on these relationships, the conversations had, the events and food shared, we are tremendously grateful. In the time spent together, there have been opportunities to listen, learn, and enjoy our shared deep passion for healthy runs of fish, for a future with wild food security, and clean drinking water. We want to thank the Lax Kw'alaams First Nations, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, the Siletz, the Warm Springs, the Klamath, the Round Valley, the Karuk, and the Yurok for their time, collaboration, and support. While there is much work left to do, we're excited for your help building these relationships and advancing the revival of abundant wild fish and thriving Northwest communities.









#### Inspiring Volunteers Builds A Groundswell For Wild Revival

Matt Lund is a father, a physical therapist, a serious steelhead angler, and our River Steward volunteer for the Siletz River on the mid-Oregon Coast. Through the course of exploring his homewaters, Matt found a challenge facing wild fish - a really big one. Since 1957, a rusting culvert half a football field in length blocked wild Steelhead, threatened Coho Salmon, Chinook Salmon, Cutthroat Trout, and Pacific Lamprey from 16 miles of high-quality habitat in North Creek. Sadly, Matt also learned that just about everyone knew about this culvert - the Oregon Fish Commission made a point of singling it out as problematic as far back as the 1960s. As a result, generations of wild fish were unable to benefit from the habitats in North Creek and generations of anglers like Matt wanted to fix the culvert but didn't know how.

Thankfully, from Matt's experience with the River Steward community and the training that your generosity helped support, he knew one dedicated person could build a groundswell of support capable of making a big, positive impact. In January of 2015, Matt sat down with then River Steward District Coordinator Conrad Gowell and put together a plan. They would build a coalition of local supporters to make the project a priority for Siuslaw National Forest and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Then they would leverage this big coalition to raise the more than \$1 million necessary to replace the failing culvert with a larger natural span over the creek. Matt and Conrad set a goal for themselves, they would reconnect wild fish with North Creek within five years.

The first big step forward occurred in late 2015 when 44 local community members signed onto a letter Matt wrote to the staff at the Siuslaw National Forest. Soon, the National Forest joined community members as a partner and the project was made a priority. In 2016, Matt and Conrad created an online crowdfunding campaign and worked with Native Fish Fellow Octave Zangs to capture the beauty of North Creek. Octave is a filmmaker and volunteered his skills and passion so that Matt's story about the culvert and North Creek could connect far beyond the watershed. Soon donations big and small were adding up and large funders and partners took notice. In 2018, Native Fish staff worked with Matt to apply for and secure a \$150,000 grant with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Likewise, the Siuslaw National Forest, the Mid-Coast Watershed Council, and many other partners helped secure the final funds necessary to break ground on the project.

As Matt and Conrad looked on, just about five years after they started, huge excavators removed the rusting culvert in the summer of 2019. By the fall, the restoration work was complete and for the first time in 62 years, wild fish could easily access North Creek. Underwater photographer and Native Fish Fellow David Herasimtschuk used his skills to capture the iconic image at the head of this page, a wild Chinook Salmon swimming through the new passageway to North Creek. As Matt says, the success of this project took many people and organizations. However, its catalyst stems from a few dedicated folks and our generous supporters who help us train and inspire volunteers who build a groundswell of support that can change everything.

#### PARTNER OF THE YEAR: PATAGONIA



In 2019, we recognized Patagonia as our Partner of the Year for their longstanding support for our work reviving abundant wild fish, free-flowing rivers, and thriving communities across the Pacific Northwest. Since the inception of Native Fish Society's signature River Steward Program in 2008, Patagonia consistently invested in the tools, resources, and staffing needed to help our grassroots community grow and thrive. In 2011, when our volunteer River Steward Spencer Miles initiated the Save Sandy Salmon campaign, Patagonia jumped in as as an early supporter. Ultimately, this grassroots effort reformed the Sandy Hatchery's harmful practices and helped accelerate the recovery of wild fish in the Sandy and in rivers across

the state of Oregon and Washington. When Patagonia founder Yvon Chouinard appeared in a commercial with American Express during the Oscars, he donated all proceeds to conservation organizations including Native Fish Society. When Yvon co-wrote, *Simply Fly Fishing: Techniques for Tenkara and Rod and Reel* with Mauro Mazzo and Craig Mathews, again proceeds were directed toward the conservation and revival of native fish worldwide, including through our efforts in the Northwest. Perhaps the most significant effort made to support the mission and vision of the Native Fish Society was through our partnership on Patagonia's full-length documentary film, *Artifishal*. Of all of the issues facing the revival of wild fish, salmon aquaculture is perhaps the most challenging to communicate well. Through our collaboration with Patagonia staff, the film's director, and Patagonia ambassadors, *Artifishal* has shared far and wide the damage and hubris that comes from our ongoing attempt to mechanize and replace the wild world, including its wild fish and their homewaters.

#### NEW MEMBER PROFILE: KIRSTEN KINSMAN



Tative Fish Society's more than 4,000 members and supporters make our work possible. It's your passion and generosity that enlivens our mission. To thank one of our newest Lifetime members Executive Director, Mark Sherwood, visited with Kirsten Kinsman and learned more about her, her homewaters, and why she joined NFS in 2019. We're so grateful to Kirsten and all of you that support the revival of abundant wild fish members of the Natie Fish Society.

## Hi Kirsten. Good to see you. Tell me about your favorite river - your homewaters?

My homewaters are the northern Oregon coastal rivers.

I mostly fish the rivers that flow into Tillamook Bay as well as the Nestucca and Nehalem rivers. I don't have any boating skills and I have been able to find lots of bank access on these rivers, especially since I am willing to walk or bushwack a bit.

### I love those northern Oregon Coastal streams. Do you have a favorite native fish? If so, what makes that fish so special to you?

Steelhead is my favorite native fish. My son and I first fished for steelhead with a guide when he was 9. I admit, I barely even knew what a steelhead was. With time we evolved from indicator fishing out of boat to primarily swinging for steelhead. When George was 12, he announced that he was going to "focus" on anadromous fish and this drove our fascination with steelhead. Native anadromous fish are just amazing creatures. To be able to connect with one, however briefly, is one of my greatest pleasures. And as a parent, I am lucky to have many fond memories of chasing them with my son.

#### Why did you join NFS as a Lifetime Member?

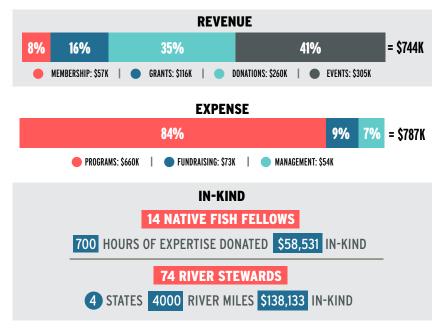
Quite simply, I want to help preserve and hopefully replenish native fish for future generations. I want my son to be able to fish for a wild steelhead with his son or daughter as I do with him. I became a lifetime member because this struggle will be forever, and I believe in making personal investment of time and effort towards that goal.

To support the NFS's work as an annual, adiposessed monthly member, or a lifetime member visit www.nativefishsociety.org/membership



#### Revenue, Expense & In-Kind for Fiscal Year 2019

Financial results for fiscal year ending December 31, 2019



<sup>\*</sup>Please direct financial questions to mark@nativefishsociety.org.

#### **Grants & Foundations**

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Please contact Tracy Buckner at tracy@ nativefishsociety.org with any spelling or omission errors.

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Ryan & Nikki

Rvan Havsev

Goldsmith

(COVER) Wild salmon hanging in their homewaters. Photo: David Herasimtschuk/Freshwaters Illustrated







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