



The **STEELHEADER**

Official Newsletter of Tri-State Steelheaders Salmon Enhancement Group

STUDENTS CELEBRATE SALMON SEND-OFF

We are quickly approaching the end of another school year and another year of raising spring chinook salmon in our local classrooms. In the next two months, each of our schools will be releasing between 50-100 spring chinook smolts into Mill Creek, the Touchet, and Tucannon Rivers.

After spending eight months cooped up in an aquarium, these 2 ½ inch salmon will be exposed to the dangers of temperature change, countless predators, and finding their own food. It is also a bittersweet moment for many of the students, as daily care and feeding of the salmon creates attachments as if they were class pets or mascots.

Lots of our salmon smolts acquire names. Jacqueline Fisbeck, the 3rd grade teacher at Prescott Elementary, noted her student's affection for their salmon friends. "I know one

is Tiger and I think they had a Bob as well. The biggest one is Tiger, they always look for him and can easily find him. He's been the biggest one since they started



Two Davis Elementary students take one last look at their salmon (left). Many students wore their salmon hats, which they made as part of their Salmon in School activities (above).



swimming. They are so proud of him that they named him after our school mascot." As school comes to a close, students will be wishing "Tiger", "Bob", and hundreds of additional spring chinook smolts a safe journey, with hopes they safely return to our watershed.

Students from Davis Elementary

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Each student got to release one salmon, but there were still fish remaining, so many kids got to release two or three fish.

released about 80 chinook smolts on April 27th into Mill Creek. Darin Durand's 5th grade class was accompanied by their 1st grade "pals." After the fish release, the students went on a nature scavenger hunt.

Many students were heard saying goodbye to their fish by name. In addition, shouts of "bye-bye," "see you in four years," and "have a safe trip to the ocean!" could be heard.

YOUTH FISHING CLASSES UNDERWAY WITH YMCA

Fishing season is here, and with it comes another year of Fishing 101. This is our yearly program in partnership with the Walla Walla YMCA that aims to teach our local youth not only how to fish but also give them hands on experience.

Eight children participated in the class this year, and they have taken to fishing like a fish takes to water! They have learned knot tying, casting techniques, how to use different types of fishing gear, and how to properly handle and land a fish.

Due to low water levels in Bennington Lake, the class had to shift to Jefferson Park Pond for the beginning classes. During their

time there, the children discovered frogs, snakes, and a family of geese, but unfortunately no fish were caught (yet!). The kids also got a lesson in stewardship, taking time to clean up the trash they made as well as that of others, and how to treat the animals they find with compassion.

Once fish are stocked in Bennington Lake, we will be able to hold lessons there and the kids should have a much easier time catching fish. By the end of last year's class, all of the students had caught at least one fish, and our goal is to do the same this year! At the end of the class, each student will receive a goodie bag with some fun items, water and fishing safety information, and some simple fishing gear to help them get started on their way to being fishermen!



Students in Fishing 101 practice knot tying (left) and casting skills (above).

WE OFFER FISHING 101 FOR GROWN-UPS TOO

Our other Fishing 101 class is a fly fishing course, which is geared towards adults with limited fly fishing experience. The class kicked off in early April with four eager students.

Meeting every Tuesday night at the Steelheaders' office, we spend one hour of "class" time covering the basic information that is critical to know as a fly angler. Nightly topics encompass choosing the right



Fly Fishing 101 participants Patricia Relaford, Scott Landwehr, and Matt Landwehr during casting practice.

equipment, the life cycles of critical insects, knots, choosing the right fly, reading water, and casting technique. The second hour is dedicated to casting practice, often taking place at Pioneer Park.

Students are given loaner fly rods for personal use for the duration of the course, allowing them to practice at home and on the weekends to work on the fundamentals. "It's been astonishing to witness the improvement in the students' casting motion, timing, and confidence," said instructor Andrew Bassler.

Andrew went on to say, "We are planning an end-of-the-class trip to one of our local streams or lakes to test our newly acquired skills and maybe fool a fish or two into taking a fly. Catching your first fish on a fly is an exciting, proud moment, which would be a great way to cap our class and reward them for their hard work."

We're planning for another session this summer. The cost is \$75 for non-members, or \$50 for our members. Here is your chance to get outside and learn how to catch some fish on a fly! Space is limited. Contact Andrew Bassler, Education Coordinator, at 529-3543, or at andrew@tristatesteelheaders.com to sign up.

Get Your Tickets!!! Crab Feed Fundraiser



**May 17th
5 p.m.**

**Walla Walla
County Fairgrounds**

**Crab, Shrimp, Salads!
Bucket Raffle!
Live and Silent Auctions!**

**Proceeds support Salmon in
School, Kids Fishing Days, Jumbo
Trout, Fishing Classes, and more!**

**Tickets available at our office, and at
the Visit Walla Walla kiosk**



WDFW fish biologist Joe Bumgarner visited the Davis Elementary Salmon in School class prior to the release of their fish. He showed the students how to weigh and measure their fish. He then implanted the fish with PIT tags, that will allow their travel to the ocean to be tracked. PIT tags are monitored at many locations along the Columbia River.

WALLA WALLA NATIVE HIRED AS OUR NEW PROJECT MANAGER

This winter we added a new member to our team - Aaron Mettler joins us as our Project Manager.

Aaron grew up in Walla Walla with his parents and two brothers. A 2007 Walla Walla High School grad, he completed a B.S. and an M.S. in Biology with an emphasis in Fisheries Sciences at Eastern Washington University. His master's thesis focused on the abundance, distribution, and life history of over 25 fish species located in the Colville River Watershed.



During a roadtrip to California, Aaron had a chance to stop at Crater Lake.

Before joining our team Aaron worked as a Fisheries Technician in Washington, Oregon, and California. In this role he has worked on projects that have estimated salmon spawning populations, tagged bull trout to track their movements, conducted surveys to assess stream health/condition, assessed juvenile salmon habitat usage, and assessed impacts to native species by introduced/non-native species. "I am excited to bring these experiences back to Walla Walla and apply them to projects that will help improve passage and habitat for salmon and steelhead," said Aaron.

MORE JUMBO TROUT FOR SOUTHEAST WASHINGTON

Earlier this year, our board of directors voted unanimously to continue our partnership with Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife to offer jumbo trout to the anglers of southeast Washington.

"Jumbos" are considered to be 14 inches or bigger, and average 1.5 pounds. "Catchables" are considered to be 8 inches, and about a half pound each. As of the end of April, 121 jumbos have already been stocked in Bennington Lake. These are the 2016 brood year fish, reared at the Tucannon Hatchery for about 15 months.



"We've been getting calls for about a month asking when we will be stocking Bennington Lake," says Brian Burns, Executive Director. "While we provide the food for the jumbos, we do not do the stocking. WDFW stocks the lakes by their own schedule. What we do know is that they will not stock Bennington Lake until it can be filled for recreational use, and that didn't happen this year until late April."

Tri-State Steelheaders has supported the jumbo trout program since 2009. We purchase fish food in installments throughout the year, and WDFW provides the staff and facilities to raise the trout. Our contribution of \$5,500 will result in around 4,000 jumbo trout in southeast Washington lakes and ponds.

Your support makes the Jumbo Trout Program possible through donations to our Fish Food Fund and with proceeds from the Crab Feed fundraiser.

WHERE ARE THE FISH?

Check out the WDFW stocking report:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/plants/weekly>

Here you can see what has been stocked in the last week by county, species stocked, or hatchery source

TWO CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS TO START WITH NEW GRANTS

Two new grants will allow us to continue work on two big projects to benefit summer steelhead, spring chinook, and bull trout in the Walla Walla basin.

The Bridge to Bridge Phase Two project will install log structures in the Walla Walla River near Lowden to improve instream and riparian habitat. Phase One, completed in 2013, removed a half-mile of levee on state-owned property, and installed log structures for habitat. Phase Two continues in the downstream direction, and has a budget of \$510,461. In total, four phases are planned for this reach of the river between McDonald Road and Lowden-Gardena Road.

The next section of Mill Creek to receive passage improvements is between Park Street and Otis Street. Here, as with previous Mill Creek projects, the concrete channel will be modified to improve the depth and velocity of water so it will be more favorable to adult and juvenile migrations. Resting pools will be added because the existing channel does not provide any resting areas. The project's budget is \$976,097.

Both projects are funded by grants from the Salmon Recovery Funding Board, and scheduled for construction in 2019. Matching funds for the Mill Creek project will be provided by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Bonneville Power Administration. Project Manager Aaron Mettler is busy working on permit applications for both. Our hope is to have permitting completed this fall, and to receive construction bids before the end of the year.



The proposed conditions for the Mill Creek channel. Roughness provides slower water favorable for adult passage. The new baffles improve juvenile passage during summer low flow.

Kids' Fishing Days

Mark your calendar!

June 10
Bennington
Lake
8am - noon



July 7
Jubilee
Lake
9am-1pm



Join us for:
Casting Contest
Biggest Fish Contest
Hot Dogs & Pepsi
Prizes and other giveaways
for all participants

New fishing poles for
contest winners!!!



Tri-State Steelheaders is supported by funding from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's *Partners for Fish and Wildlife*, and by funds administered by Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife





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CRAB FEED FUNDRAISER

May 18, 2017

We hope to see you there!

Inside: Kids Release Salmon | Fishing 101 | Jumbo Trout

Join the Tri-State Steelheaders!!

___ Individual (\$15) ___ Family (\$25) ___ Business (\$35)

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Send your check with this form to:

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Visit us online at www.tristatesteelheaders.com

Thank you for your support!!!

Tri-State Steelheaders' mission is to restore sustainable populations of native salmonids by enhancing habitat, providing public education, and promoting recreational angling.