



# The **STEELHEADER**

Official Newsletter of the Tri-State Steelheaders Salmon Enhancement Group

## MORE KIDS RAISING SALMON IN SCHOOL!!

Three more schools joined the *Salmon in School* Program for the 2018-2019 school year, bringing the total number of schools in the program to twelve.

These three schools-Waitsburg, Dixie, and Touchet Elementary-have greatly expanded our rural school footprint and are very excited to raise, learn about, and then release their salmon in the spring. All three schools will be releasing their salmon into the Touchet River, which is conveniently close to the schools. Mrs. Debra Ortiz (Touchet 4<sup>th</sup> grade), Mrs. Steph Hinchliffe (Waitsburg 1<sup>st</sup> grade), and Mr. Bill Clancy (Dixie 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grades) are the three new dedicated teachers joining the program-thank you so much for working with us.

Each of the twelve schools received 125 spring chinook salmon eggs, which were picked up from either the South Fork of the Walla Walla adult holding facility near Harris Park, or the Umatilla Hatchery in Irrigon, OR. The eggs came from wild spring chinook salmon attempting to enter the Umatilla River, where they were trapped and trucked to the



*Education Coordinator Andrew Bassler assists the Prescott 3rd grade with their gyotaku fish prints.*

holding facility near Harris Park.

The water quality of each aquarium has been closely monitored, as has been the development of the salmon. Arriving at each tank as eggs, the salmon quickly hatch and reach alevin stage as winter begins. After winter break, they advanced to the stage of fry. We are now preparing them for their release into our local watersheds by increasing their food intake and gradually raising the water temperature in the tanks.

Students and volunteers have been feeding them twice a day, ensuring a healthy population of strong salmon will enter our rivers ready for their long journey to the wide open ocean. Three schools will be releasing their salmon into Mill Creek, four into the Tucannon River, four into the Touchet River, and one school will release into Yellowhawk Creek.

Next spring, two more NEW schools (Starbuck, Sharpstein) and the Walla Walla YMCA will be releasing salmon as well, bringing the total number of *Salmon in School* sites to 15!



*Sager 5th graders create paper models to understand how water moves through a watershed.*

## NEW STAFF TO HELP WITH HABITAT AND EDUCATION

### Steven Poulos, Project Manager

Steven joined our staff in September, after moving to Walla Walla from Newfoundland, Canada, where he spent two years working on his Master's Degree. He researched Atlantic salmon and brown trout hybridization, with emphasis on reproduction and offspring development. Although it was a big transition and a drastic change of scenery, climate, and culture, he is excited to be in the northwest.

Originally from Vermont, Steven grew up hiking, camping, hunting and fishing. Doing so, he developed an understanding and deep appreciation for natural systems. Prior to pursuing college, Steven worked at a woodshop in Vermont making hardwood furniture. In addition to woodworking, he helped manage a forest utilized for maple syrup production, and contracted small-scale carpentry jobs on the side. While in high school and through four years of employment post high school, Steven played music with a group of friends he grew up with. "This is where I focused my energy while being inside. Especially



*Steven on a typical cold, dreary spring day in Hearts Content, Newfoundland.*

during the predictable, Vermont winter week (or two) of minus 20 degrees F."

During his undergraduate studies at Paul Smith's College, Steven spent a summer working for Trout Unlimited in the northeast - where his interest in stream restoration/habitat enhancement spawned.

He travelled to Montana and Colorado to work as a summer technician for a private timber company, and for the US Forest Service. "Although the geology, climate, flora and fauna, people, politics, food, and the overall feeling of each place is drastically different, the scientific method and my ecological perception of the landscape is the same. I'm happy to bring my experience, work ethic, and knowledge to the Columbia River Basin - a special, and extremely important region that needs attention."

### Aimee Taylor, AmeriCorps Volunteer

Hi. My name is Aimee Taylor and I am an AmeriCorps member serving as an environmental educator for Tri-State Steelheaders.

My passion and reverence for the outdoors began as a child growing up in South Lake Tahoe, California. My parents taught me from a young age to love and respect our earth and its inhabitants.

I went on to pursue a bachelor of science degree in wildlife, fish and conservation biology

### Tri-State Steelheaders

is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation

#### Our Mission

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

### Our Board of Directors

Monty Buell, President  
Dave Crabtree, Vice President  
Dave Cowles, Secretary  
Tom Whitaker, Treasurer  
Richard Collins  
Scott Landwehr  
Mike Mahan  
Tim Parker  
Dan Vernon  
Peggy Willcuts  
Larry Zalaznik

### Our Staff

Andrew Bassler, Education Coordinator  
Brian Burns, Executive Director  
Donna Jones, Administrative Assistant  
Steven Poulos, Project Manager  
Aimee Taylor, AmeriCorps Volunteer

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



from the University of California, Davis. I specialized in fisheries biology, because it seemed like that was where most of the jobs were going to be. Little did I know how much I would actually fall in love with watershed science, stream ecology and conservation of native fishes.

I graduated from UC Davis in 2016 and began working seasonal field jobs as a fisheries technician. These jobs brought me all over the state of California surveying wild trout, anadromous salmonids and their habitat. I have been lucky enough to participate in central valley flood plain restoration, salmon spawning and carcass surveys, and population monitoring of some of the world's rarest trout species.

Although many people would consider tramping around the mountains and the valleys looking for fish a dream job, I started to feel like something was missing. In some cases, I felt overworked, undervalued and like I was not making a noticeable difference. I came to realize that collecting data for scientific research is only a tiny piece in the huge complicated puzzle that is conservation. Collecting the data is actually the easiest part.

In order to make real change, we need to communicate the data in ways that non-science minded



*Aimee with a wild steelhead she caught on the Klamath River, Fall 2018.*

It's time for the

# Crab Feed Fundraiser!!!



**May 16th  
5pm**

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!**

**For tickets:**

Give us a call at 529-3543, or stop by the Visit Walla Walla kiosk on Main St.

folks could understand. This is why I decided to move here to Walla Walla and join the team at Tri-State Steelheaders. Through environmental education, people in our community can come together and discuss the challenges that our local ecosystems face. In a world where there are competing needs for resources it can be hard for some people to understand why fish are important.

I am here to help connect people to their watersheds. I hope that over time I can convey that healthy watersheds = healthy people = resources for future generations!

In my free time, I love fly-fishing, backpacking, or just getting cozy with a cup of tea and a movie. I am also looking forward to visiting with more with my older brother who lives in Portland.

Catch me with our education coordinator, Andrew, teaching kids about the salmon life cycle, the Columbia River watershed and of course, teaching kids how to fish at Bennington Lake this spring!

## PARTNERSHIP RESULTS IN PROTECTION FOR FISH

The Jones Ditch provides irrigation water for about 330 acres on two farms. The water in Jones Ditch comes directly from Mill Creek, and returns to Yellowhawk Creek. This means that juvenile salmon and steelhead could find their way into the ditch, where three unscreened irrigation intakes posed a direct threat to juvenile fish when the ditch was in use.

One approach to protecting fish would be to screen the diversion from Mill Creek into the ditch. However, this is an expensive and complicated option. A screen large enough to handle the volume of water entering the ditch is estimated at over \$100,000. Plus, the ditch inlet is on Corps of Engineers property. Another approach would be to screen each of the three irrigation intakes. At nearly half the cost of the first option, this was the chosen option.

The Walla Walla County Conservation District approached the two landowners for permission to conduct the project. After all concerns were addressed, the project was constructed in early October 2018 by Royse Hydroseeding and Excavating. Tri-State Steelheaders assisted as a cost-share partner, providing \$15,000 to the project.

Refurbished fish screens, which were about a third of the cost of new screens, were provided by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's Yakima Screen Shop. These screens are compliant with state and federal fish passage criteria, and combine to protect diversion of six cubic feet per second (cfs) of water. These elaborate screens are not simply a section of screen placed over the end of the pipe. These screens are self-cleaning with a rotating brush, greatly reducing maintenance of the screens.



*Water enters the screen to the rear of this view. Fish leave through the pipe on the left, while fish-free water flows out the pipe closest to the viewer. A paddlewheel inside the unit propels a brush that cleans the screen.*

## FISH TOSS HELPS ENRICH TUCANNON RIVER

In January, volunteers helped to distribute over 1,300 chinook carcasses in the Tucannon River, providing nutrients for the next generation of salmon.

Eight AmeriCorps volunteers dedicated a team activity day to toss 361 carcasses between Panjab and Camp Wooten.

The next day, over 20 volunteers, including Steelheaders board members Scott Landwehr and Mike Mahan, turned out to load nearly 900 carcasses into their trucks. These were distributed between the Tucannon Hatchery and the Highway 12 bridge. In all, 145 volunteer hours were logged in the effort.

Our thanks to Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife for the fish and the opportunity, and to Mike Gallinat and Dane Kiefel for organizing the event.



*AmeriCorps volunteers carry salmon carcasses to the Tucannon River near the Forest Service Guard Station (above). Mike Mahan lobs a fish near Marengo (below).*



## HABITAT PROJECTS CONTINUE WITH TWO NEW GRANTS

In early December, the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) awarded two new grants to the Tri-State Steelheaders.

One grant will fulfill the budget of Bridge to Bridge Phase 2. The project will install large wood structures in the Walla Walla River near Lowden to provide pools and cover habitat. Construction is planned for summer 2019.

The second grant funds the Mill Creek 6<sup>th</sup> Ave Extension Design, which will complete bid-ready plans for fish passage improvements in the flood control channel.

Our last project in Mill Creek ended just upstream of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ave bridge. This design phase will begin there, and end at the outlet of the underground channel at 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. At the completion of this design project, we will apply for construction funds for a construction date as early as 2021. When this section is complete, we will have applied passage improvements to the entirety of the concrete channel downstream of the underground section.



## FREE FISHING AND UP-COMING EVENTS

In Oregon, this year's free fishing weekends are June 1-2, August 17-18 and November 29-30. Fishing regulations and limits still apply.

The free fishing weekend in Washington will be June 8-9. Anyone can fish without a license on these days.

Two youth-oriented fishing events will be held on Sunday, June 9th. Kids' Fishing Day at Bennington Lake in Walla Walla will be from 8am-noon. The newly reconstructed Rainbow Lake on the Tucannon River will also host a fishing derby that day. Follow us on Facebook for details.

## WHERE CAN I FIND JUMBO TROUT?

Early this year, the Steelheaders Board of Directors approved another year of funding for Jumbo Trout with Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife. This will provide about 4,000 rainbow trout at 1.5-2 pounds each in 20 fishing lakes throughout southeast Washington.

Lakes are starting to be stocked these days. Want to know where the fish are? WDFW's stocking report is online at:

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/reports/stocking/trout-plants>

## Support the Tri-State Steelheaders!!

Help us add *Salmon in School* at Starbuck, Sharpstein, and the YMCA!!!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual Membership (\$15)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership (\$25)

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Business Membership (\$35)

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Donation (\_\_\_\_\_)  
amount

Send your payment with this form to:

Tri-State Steelheaders  
PO Box 1375  
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Or, you can give online:

[www.tristatesteelheaders.com/take-action/](http://www.tristatesteelheaders.com/take-action/)



Tri-State Steelheaders  
216 N. Roosevelt St.  
PO Box 1375  
Walla Walla, WA 99362  
(509) 529-3543  
web: [www.tristatesteelheaders.com](http://www.tristatesteelheaders.com)  
email: [tssfsh@tristatesteelheaders.com](mailto:tssfsh@tristatesteelheaders.com)  
Facebook: [@tristate.steelheaders](https://www.facebook.com/tristate.steelheaders)



**Crab Feed Fundraiser May 16th!!!**

*In this issue of the STEELHEADER:*

**Fish Toss Feeds the Tucannon**



**More *Salmon in School* Than Ever**

