

Covering the Drift

Volume 24 Issue 1 February 2020



**FLY FISHERS
INTERNATIONAL**

Washington State Council

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Prime Lies

Changing Leaders, New Events

By Bill Wheeler

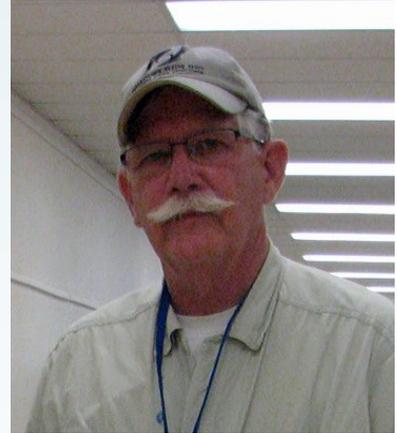
Happy New Decade! A lot of things are changing in the world and let's make Fly Fishers International (FFI) and Washington State Council (WSC) part of the solutions. The accomplishments of the WSC in the last decade have been lead by Carl Johnson (with a lot of help from his wife Maura) and the Board of Directors. Carl and Maura are moving to Montana in the next year and will become less involved in the WSC. I want to give them my heartfelt thanks for the platform they have developed. We also need to thank Len Zickler who stepped in as interim President and CEO of the FFI and to lead the search for a permanent President and CEO. Len cut back his responsibility when Patrick Berry was named President and CEO. Unfortunately for us, an all encompassing second career has taken over Len's life and he as had to resign from our board. We wish him well.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize our hard-working Board of Directors. Our Board is composed of individuals elected by you and FFI BOD members who live in our state. Rather than pro-

vide a litany of people and their accomplishments on the board at this time, I feel the need to emphasize some of the changes for WSC going forward and will revisit individual Board contributors in future Prime Lies.

As we have mentioned, there will not be a Fly Fishing Fair in Ellensburg in 2020. As the snows have demonstrated, our state is physically divided by the magnificent Cascade Mountains. We are lucky to have them, but they are an obstacle to easy travel across the state at certain times. The board has decided that our events may be better attended if they are held west of the Cascades where the majority of our members reside.

In a previous column I mentioned that the lack of a fair meant we would not have a volunteers auction/dinner where we would raise funds to donate to other nonprofits like Project Healing Waters. Board members Carol Anderson, Sam Matalone and Steve Jones jumped into the fray and developed an ongoing online auction that will generate funds for the various organizations we support. This has Continued on page 6



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Special points of interest

- Complete list of events and times for the Fly Casting Fair May 2 at Luther Burbank Park on Mercer Island.
- New Conservation VP Carol Anderson embraces the big picture of in her column. Her goal is to help FFI members become better informed about issues statewide.
- The campaign to acquire fishing access on the Grande Ronde River was a success. Nearly a dozen FFI clubs donated to the effort to make sure key river access remained in public hands.
- A complete listing of FFI clubs in Washington with Websites..
- On the cover: A Clearwater steelhead by photographer Brian O'Keefe

Fly Casting Fair

May 2 · 9 a.m.



Luther Burbank Park
Mercer Island, WA

- › Casting Demonstrations
- › Walk-in Casting Clinic
- › Casting Workshops

- › Casting Challenge Course
- › Banquet 6 p.m. at Mercer Island Community Center



wscffi.org

For information and reservations visit www.wscffi.org

Free events, open to the public

Register for these events at

Walk in Casting Clinic opens 9 a.m.

Bring your rod for quick help from the experts. A limited number of loaner rods will be available.

Self-guided Casting Challenge opens 9 a.m.

Test your skill with off shoulder casts, mend casts, stacked line casts, double haul and distance casting

Casting Demonstrations

11 a.m. Molly Semenik demonstrating "Roll casts and switch casts."

3 p.m. Don Simmonson will focus on "Controlling the fly line"

Spey Casting Demonstration

9AM – Simplifying Spey Equipment with Molly Semenik and Todd Somsel. After discussing equipment they will head to the water to demo roll and switch casts.

1PM – Molly and Todd will demo switch cast, single spey, double spey, snake roll and snap casts.

www.wscffi.org

Workshops are 2 hours, \$45 per student, limited to eight students per class

9 AM Beginning casting workshop;
Dave McCoy

9 AM Advanced casting workshop:
Anil Srivastava

1 PM Beginning casting workshop:
Ryan Smith

1 PM Advanced casting workshop:
Tom Cammarata

**Fly Fishers International
Washington Council Banquet
begins 5 p.m., dinner 6 p.m.**

\$45 per person

Auction and awards

Conservation

Aquaculture, Petrochemicals, Ocean Harvest, Suction Dredging; Threats to Washington Fisheries Persist and Multiply

By Carol Anderson

Conservation is a constantly evolving challenge. Everything we do on the land is reflected in the health of our waters. So beginning with this issue, Conservation VP Carol Anderson is going to focus this column on news that has an impact on Washington waters. Advocates need information and Carol will include links in each news item that allows FFI members to learn more about each issue. Carol's goal is to inform people about ways to protect our waters and wild and native fisheries and help make conservation a winning strategy for everyone.

WDFW approves Cooke Aquaculture's permit to farm sterile rainbow



Cooke's Cypress Island pen collapsed releasing thousands of Atlantic salmon.

Cooke's fish farms in Washington

Cooke Aquaculture Pacific owns and operates eight fish farms in Washington, including three facilities at Cypress Island, where a farm containing 10 net pens failed Aug. 19 and 20 and Atlantic salmon escaped.

Source: Washington State Department of Ecology

AMANDA E. WELCH / THE SEATTLE TIMES



trout/steelhead in Washington

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in January approved an application from Cooke Aquaculture to farm all-female, sterile (triploid) rainbow trout/steelhead in Puget Sound.

The five-year permit applies to the seven existing net pens in Puget Sound where Cooke holds aquatic leases with the Washington Department of Natural Resources. This includes four pens currently operating near Rich Passage and Skagit Bay, but may later extend to three other net pens owned by Cooke.

"This permit was approved based on scientific review and is contingent on Cooke complying with strict provisions designed to minimize any risk to native fish species," said WDFW Deputy Director Amy Windrope.

The decision comes on the heels of Cooke's \$2.75 million settlement with the Wild Fish Conservancy for damages caused by the collapse of Cooke's net pen off Cypress Island, which released hundreds of thousands of farmed Atlantic salmon into the Salish Sea. The November 2019 settlement came days before the Wild Fish Conservancy lawsuit was to go to trial. The conservancy will use the settlement payment to fund projects to protect killer whales and wild salmon in Puget Sound through the Rose Foundation.

Wild Steelhead Coalition calls on DNR, Commissioner of Public Lands Franz and Governor Inslee to block Puget Sound fish farm proposal

The Wild Steelhead Coalition is extremely disappointed that the Department of Fish and Wildlife has approved Cooke Aquaculture's application to farm "steelhead" in Washington's public waters and is calling on the state to block Cooke's latest fish farm proposal.

For More Information: [WDFW](#); [Wild Steelhead Coalition](#)

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Grande Ronde Fishing Access

Inland Empire Leads FFI Clubs Statewide in 7-Month Fundraising Campaign to Close \$25,000 Purchase

In January, Northwest fly fishers preserved access to an iconic stretch of steelhead water on Washington's Grande Ronde River.

Thanks to the hustle of the Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club of Spokane, a well-designed acquisition plan by Seattle's Wild Steelhead Coalition and the generosity of fly fishers statewide, eight acres of prime river access are permanently in public hands. Most of the credit goes to landowners Lynn "Radar" Miller and his wife Kay. The couple has admired the rugged Grande Ronde for years and wanted future generations to enjoy it as well.

Miller owns other property in the area and for years he has looked across those eight river-side acres "and it was always nice to see the river and not a bunch of buildings," Miller said after the land sale was completed Jan. 28. "I wanted it to stay that way."

The area between the north bank of the Grand Ronde and Snake River Road has been public fishing access since the early 1980s when the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife acquired a recreation access easement from Miller. It's summer steelhead water about three miles up-stream from the confluence with the Snake River. The main feature of the property is a stony shoreline between two fishing spots known as the Turkey Run on the downstream end and the Shadow Hole on the upstream end of the property. There is a pull off onto the property and a pit toilet installed by WDFW. The spot is known as the Ebsen Fishing Access in WDFW documents. At its widest, there is only 250 feet between the river and the road.

Last year, Miller decided he needed to sell the property and offered it to WDFW, but the agency didn't have money for acquisitions. The agency turned to the

Inland Empire Fly Fishers in Spokane for ideas and club member Jim Athearn thought there had to be a way to preserve the fishing access. After a few conversations, Athearn and Miller settled on a price of \$25,000. The Wild Steelhead Coalition of Seattle agreed to act as the

non-profit transfer agent so private donors could receive tax benefits for their gifts. Now that the sale has closed, the coalition has begun the process to transfer the land to WDFW for ongoing management.

"We will enter into a land use agreement with WDFW to manage it, until the state completes steps to take it into public ownership," said Josh Mills a director of the Wild Steelhead Coalition. "There's been a lot of background work to make it a smooth transfer," he said, but



The Deal Makers

Property owners Kay and Lynn "Radar" Miller (back) worked with Jim Athearn and Josh Mills to preserve Grande Ronde access.

even so, the state's transfer process may take a year. Work began in earnest on the sale in May 2019. Nine months later the deal is done.

The Inland Empire club put up \$2,000 in earnest money to secure the land. The Wild Steelhead Coalition pledged another \$2,000 to launch fundraising.

More than a dozen clubs and individuals donated to the campaign. FFI clubs that donated included the Spokane Fly Fishers, Evergreen Fly Fishing Club, Puget Sound Fly Fishers, Columbia Basin Fly Fishers, Northwest Fly Anglers, Clark-Skamania Flyfishers, Wenatchee Valley Fly Fishers and Kelly Creek Fly Casters of Lewiston, Idaho.

In addition the Washington State Council of Fly Fishers International donated. Two national organizations also pitched in, the national board of Fly Fishers International and Back Country Hunters and Anglers.

"There was regional support for this," said Jim Athearn who spearheaded the effort. "Now it will be a regional asset forever."

Washington FFI Clubs

Alpine Flyfishers – www.alpineflyfishers.org
Bainbridge Island Fly Fishers – edwinsamuelson@comcast.net
Clark-Skamania Flyfishers - www.clark-skamania-flyfishers.org
Clearwater Fly Casters - www.clearwaterflycasters.com
Evergreen Fly Fishing Club – www.evergreenflyclub.org
Fidalgo Fly Fishers, Inc. – www.fidalgoflyfishers.com
Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club – www.iefcc.org
Lower Columbia Fly Fishers - www.lowercolumbiaflyfishers.org
Northwest Fly Anglers – www.northwestflyanglers.org
Olympic Fly Fishers of Edmonds – www.olympicflyfish.com
Olympic Peninsula Fly Fishers – www.opff.org
Overlake Fly Fishing Club – www.offc.org
Puget Sound Fly Fishers – www.psff.org
South Sound Fly Fishers – www.ssffoly.com
Spokane Fly Fishers – www.spokaneflyfishers.com
Wenatchee Valley Fly Fishers – www.wvff.net
Yakima Fly Fishers Association – www.yakima.tu.org
Washington Fly Fishing Club – www.wffc.com

Our fly fishing community is based in our Statewide network of local clubs.

Join one today.

Prime Lies

from page 2

been a great success. I hope you go to our social media and support the auctions and through that our strategic partners the funds will benefit. Click [here](#) to go to Bidding Owl.

Initially an awards/auction/banquet was proposed for 2020 while we identified a potential fair venue west of the Cascades, but two of our Board members jumped into the lurch and came up with an even better idea than just a banquet. Steve Jones and Don Simonson proposed the concept of a Casting Event and Awards Dinner. Not only that, but they identified a great venue, Luther Burbank Park and the Mercer Island Community Center that provides sufficient area for casting workshops, lessons and demonstrations while providing an excellent venue for the banquet right across the street. Bring your rod and get involved in the learning. ((Steve link here please)). This event will be on Saturday, May 2nd.

The Overlake Fly Fishing Club has agreed to set up and manage the FFI Casting

Challenge where you can assess your casting prowess in progressively more difficult tasks that are immediately applicable to improving your fishing skills. The Casting Challenge details are listed on the FFI Website Click [here](#) to go to the Skills Challenge site.

The Challenge has been immensely popular across the country. You can even get recognition with a pin and certificate as you improve your skills from Bronze, Silver to Gold. The Washington Fly Fishing Club has volunteered to have demonstration fly tyers at the event.

In addition, the Council will become even more involved in Conservation activities with our new VP Conservation Carol Anderson. She's sharing her vision in this issue.

Let's all do our best to make this next decade even better than the last! Get involved with groups like the WSC that are making a difference in our world.

Anacortes Petrochemical Export Project Cancelled

In an agreement announced in December, the owners of the Anacortes Oil Refinery withdrew plans to manufacture and export through the Salish Sea 15,000 barrels per day of mixed xylenes — petrochemicals used to make plastics. In exchange, six environmental organizations agreed to drop an ongoing appeal of permits for the project. Skagit County had issued the permits for the project. It also has signed the agreement which cancels the permits.

Producing and exporting xylenes would have caused a dramatic increase in energy use at the refinery, resulting in a climate impact equivalent to adding 75,000 vehicles to the road. The appellants argued that the County's environmental impact statement did not adequately analyze the risk of the additional vessel trips and increased threats to the endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale population in Puget Sound.

For More Information: [RE Sources](#)

Wild fish advocates oppose NOAA – approved ocean harvest plan in Southeast, AK

The Wild Fish Conservancy sent a legal notice in January to NOAA and the US Department of Commerce warning the agencies their 2020 ocean harvest plans fail to protect federally-listed salmon and Southern Resident killer whales, as required by the Endangered Species Act.

The conservancy claims overharvest of Chinook salmon in southeast Alaska threatens the coast-wide survival of wild salmon, Southern Resident killer whales, and coastal fishing communities.

Kurt Beardslee, executive director of Wild Fish Conservancy (WFC) said in a statement that “It is irresponsible for NOAA to authorize this harvest in Alaska when they know it undermines efforts to restore imperiled wild Chinook populations in Washington, British Columbia, and Oregon rivers, and contributes to the starvation of endangered Southern Resident killer whales and fishing communities all along the coast.”

“Most people don’t realize that over 97% of the Chinook salmon caught in the ocean off Southeast Alaska are not from Alaska, they’re actually from rivers in British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. These salmon are not Alaskan salmon, they belong to the rivers and peoples of the entire coast,

as well as the killer whales and coastal ecosystems that depend on them,” said Beardslee.

For More Information: [Wild Fish Conservancy](#)

Washington State Suction Dredge Mining Reform Legislation

Suction dredge mining uses gas-powered engines to vacuum rocks, gravel and sediment from the bottom



of rivers and creeks in search of gold. Science has shown the practice degrades water quality and disrupts the aquatic food. Surrounding states have limited the practice and two bills in the Washington Legislature [Senate Bill 6149](#) and [House Bill 1261](#) would do so as well, by preventing suction dredging in salmon and steelhead habitat on rivers statewide. Suction dredge mining goes on in the upper Yakima Basin, Upper Columbia, Lewis River, Spokane River, and Puget Sound rivers such as the Skykomish, Skagit, and Nooksack.

These also are rivers where we have spent millions to restore habitat. Protecting the water quality and habitat from motorized mining benefits salmon and helps increase the prey base for our orca population, as well as supporting economically vital sport, commercial, and tribal fisheries.

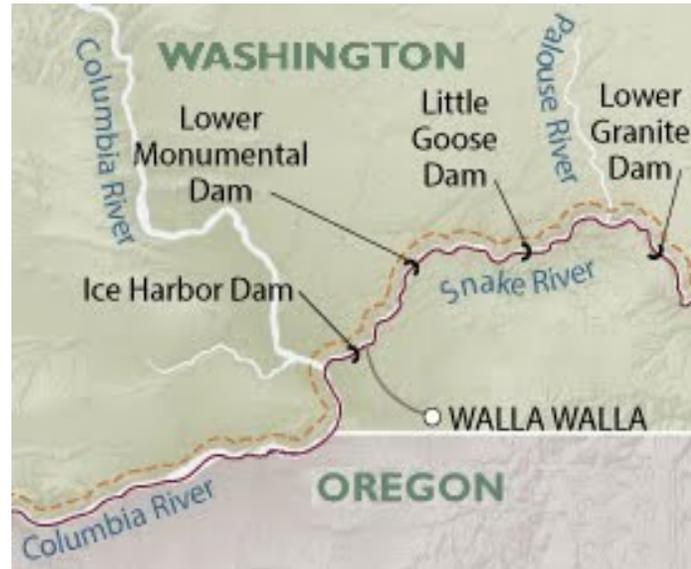
House Bill 1261 provides for common sense reform that would not ban mining, but would restrict suction dredge mining in areas critical to endangered fish populations.

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Action Alert - HB 1261 has recently passed through a key House Committee and is poised for a vote in the full House in the coming days. Please take a minute and email your state legislators **now** asking them to support this legislation now!

Dam Removal on the Lower Snake River

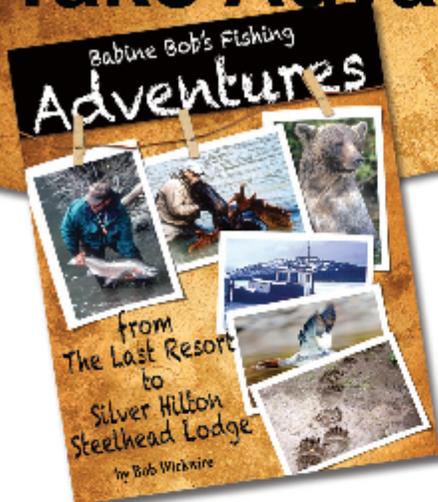
Idaho Governor Brad Little has convened a Salmon Workgroup to discuss how to restore salmon and steelhead to Idaho and a group of 50 scientists hope to influence the debate with new science on dams, water temperatures and fish survival. The scientists have sent a letter to Northwest policy makers asserting that removal of lower Snake River dams could return the water temperatures to a safe level during the warm summers months. Warming water temperatures have long been a concern of fish scientists. Last October, Trout Unlimited published a report claiming the four dams on the Lower Snake River have caused dwindling populations of salmon and steelhead as they migrate to natal streams in Idaho. The Idaho Governor's Salmon Workgroup will hold its next meeting March 5, 2020 in Boise.



For more information: [Governor's Salmon Workgroup meeting in Boise, Idaho](#)

Take Advantage

NOW!



Special Pre-Publication **Book Offer!** Babine Bob's Pioneering Fishing **Adventures** From the Last Resort to Silver Hilton Steelhead Lodge by Bob Wickwire

In misty, forest covered, Northern British Columbia flows the legendary Babine River, long known for its magnificent large steelhead to over 30 pounds. This all color, 200 plus page, 8 1/2 by 11 inch volume is truly a classic. Author Bob Wickwire and his wife Jerri Lou created several lodges known for offering the finest steelhead fishing in the world.

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From the first pages to the very end of the book you will be enjoying their continual discoveries as they fashion a beautiful life filled with almost unbelievable happenings and challenges—most successfully overcome. Bob and Jerri Lou migrated to British Columbia in the 1960s from Oregon where Bob helped pioneer Clackamas River steelheading and boating.

I have known Bob since the 1960s and can only say: "What a guy!" He has lived to become the classic steelhead river pioneer. This is his wonderful story. . . Frank Amato, Clackamas and Babine steelheader, too.

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