



FLY FISHERS
INTERNATIONAL

Washington State Council

Covering the Drift

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Home Water

Finding Home

I live in Camas in the Lower Columbia Gorge with at dozen trout, salmon and steelhead rivers in day-trip range. The fishing possibilities are endless. It takes me one trip to the Jeep to pack my gear and then a quick drive to get to any of those dozen rivers. And if someone is already in my spot when I arrive, I've fished these places long enough that I've got backups. Living where I do, fishing can become a normal part of life. That's the case in many parts of Washington and a reason why I feel lucky to live here.

Thirty years ago when I moved to Camas I flattered myself into thinking I found a few good spots unknown to anyone else. In time, I learned I was wrong. I saw other fishers in those spots, struck up conversations and learned many of those guys (they were all guys in the 1990s) belonged to a club. This club had interesting speakers at monthly meetings and frequent outings. They contributed cash and manpower to conservation

efforts. They met in a back room of a local restaurant where you had to make friends because there wasn't enough room to be a stranger. They called the club Clark-Skamania Flyfishers. I joined.

Programs introduced me to fascinating destinations: The Seven Lakes Basin in the Olympic National Park, The Seep Lakes south of Potholes Reservoir, rainbow fishing on the Upper Columbia, Washington's legendary spring creek Rocky Ford. During the cocktail hour before meetings I watched club members tie any number of flies. I learned how to spin deer hair. I learned the difference between hooks. I discovered sink tips. I caught more fish.

It only cost \$35 a year to join that club then and it was worth every penny. Between work and family, I never made a club outing those first 10 years but those meetings kept me in touch with fishers and kept expanding my interest in the sport. So, seven years ago when I finally had the leisure to help lead the club I was all in. I



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Special points of interest

- Roadless area designation has been a way to protect fragile environments from development. That designation is now under threat in the Tongass National Forest.
- FFI clubs in Washington are working to stay connected to members with online meetings, informal online gatherings and soon even fly tying gatherings. Learn how clubs are navigating the online world on page 4.
- On the Cover: Fall Colors of a different kind. A collection of spey rods at rest captured by photographer Dave McCoy.

Conservation

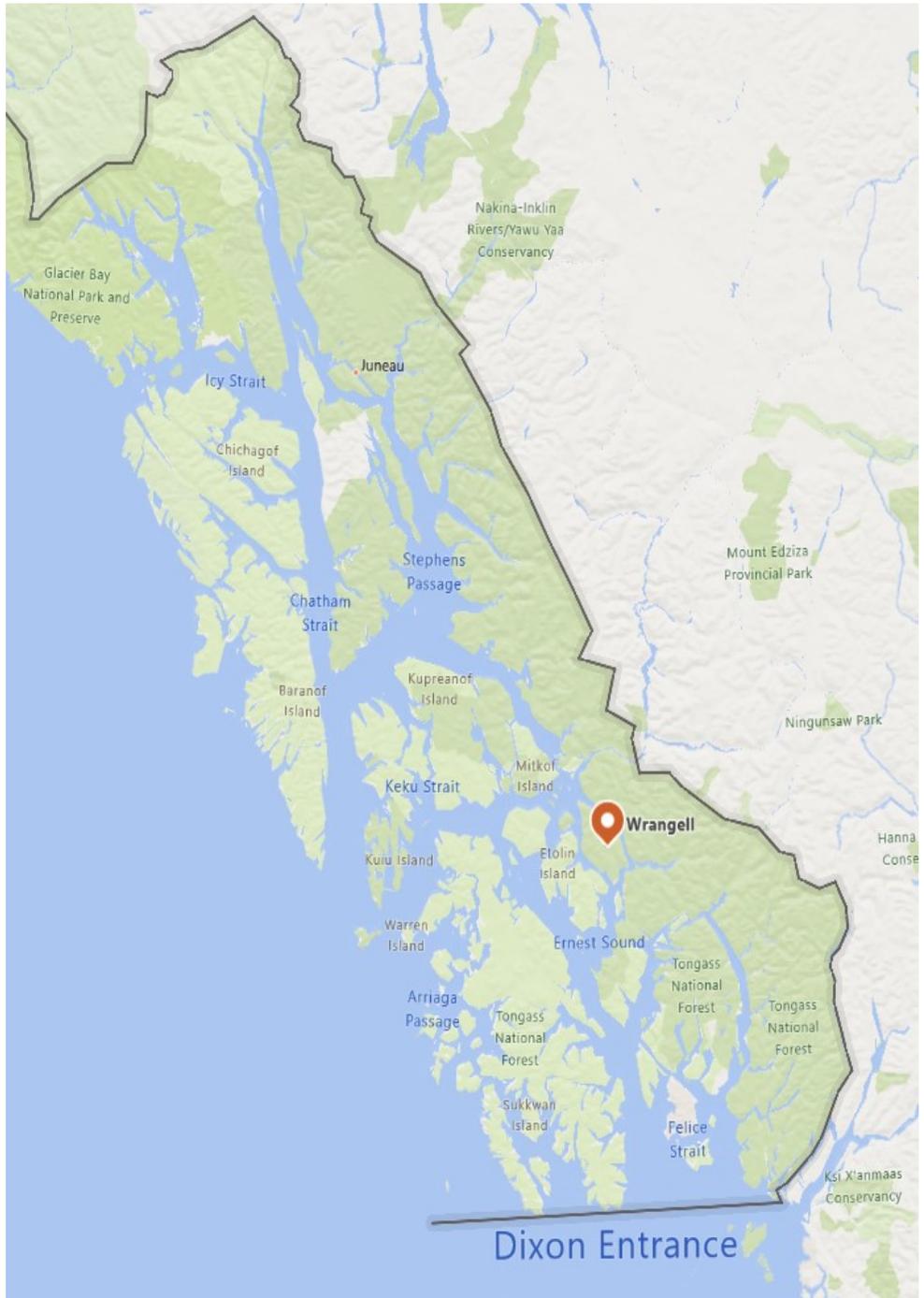
The Tongass Under Threat

By Mike Clancy

When people refer to The Tongass, they're talking about the Tongass National Forest located in the lower southeast section of Alaska. The nearest town is Wrangell. It is 9.2 million acres, the largest National Forest in the USA and it has enjoyed protection from logging and development because it was designated a roadless area.

Despite opposition from environmental, indigenous groups and state politicians, the Trump Administration took a major step toward exempting the Tongass National Forest from a 2001 roadless rule preventing commercial logging

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The Tongass National Forest stretches about 400 miles from Skagway south to Ketchikan and east to the Canadian border. Fishing is the dominant industry. Logging surged after World War II, much of it to support pulp mills. Pulp production gave way to more profitable tourism in the 1970s that today employs about 10,000 in a \$2 billion industry focused on boating, fishing, hiking and lodging. There are 31 communities in The Tongass including Juneau, the state capitol.

Staying In Touch in the Time of Covid

By Steve Jones

I've been talking to officers of fly clubs in Washington and Alaska about how they are handling club meetings and activities after seven months of pandemic. The responses have varied, but Doug Nordstrom, treasurer of the Evergreen Fly Fishing Club summed it up well.

"We're deep into the process of seeing how we can connect with our membership," he said during a recent phone call. The challenge is to "keep them aware and active in the club since we can't physically meet."

The challenge is the same for every club. In conversation with offic-

ers in nine of the 17 clubs in the Washington Council of FFI it became clear the challenge is finding ways stay in touch since indoor group activities are unwise and outdoor gatherings few and far between. Clubs have cancelled most outings. Annual awards banquets, fundraising auctions, Christmas parties have all gone by the wayside. An overriding concern of every officer was finding ways to stay in touch without threatening the health of their membership.

"It's gotten a little rough with the covid," said Fil Martinez of the Fairbanks Fly Fishers. There are three Alaska fly clubs in the Washington Council. Social distancing is a priority for clubs affiliated with Project Healing Waters. The Fairbanks club is one of those clubs.

The Cowlitz Fly Anglers have met informally on the back porch at the Black Heron Fly Fishing shop in Longview, said member John Kendall. Members show up in masks, keep a social distance and catch up over a cup of coffee.

The Washington Council has some help to offer. We now have a Zoom account to share. Zoom is the online meeting and conver-

sation software that businesses and families are using to stay in touch at social distance. The council can lend the account to any of the clubs in the council at no cost. Details appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

Online meetings can work. The Overlake Fly Club

held its first Zoom meeting in April. The gatherings are attracting about 40 to 50 members. President Steve Foisie said the club also has held a few casual gatherings online to talk about fishing techniques and destinations.

Puget Sound Fly Fishers held its second monthly Zoom meeting in September and plans to continue meeting online. Fidalgo Fly Fishers will hold its October meeting online and is planning to launch its regular fly tying gatherings online as well. Northwest Fly Anglers are holding their fourth Zoom meeting this month. Clark-Skamania Flyfishers held its first monthly meeting online in September where President Don Kohler was surprised to count "66 noses." The club has several husband and wife members and couples appeared together in many Zoom windows, he

Get online with Zoom

If you want to borrow the Washington Council Zoom account to put your club meetings online contact President@wscffi.org. Only one club can use the account at a time, so use will be scheduled to avoid conflicts

Staying in Touch

said.

And more clubs are getting online. Both the Alpine Fly Fishers and the Inland Empire Fly Fishing Club are holding membership meetings online for the first time in October.

Keeping a membership club together and functioning during a pandemic is hard. We're all beginners at this. A tip of the hat to clubs that have figured it out. Keep up the effort. For clubs that are still wondering about the process one way to learn is to listen in on a meeting by a club that has successfully moved online. Contact President@wscffi.org to get contact information for upcoming club meetings.

Best Practices

- Ask for help. Some clubs have a member who hosts the meeting on a separate computer from the president who leads the meeting. At the Overlake club, Steve Fosie said the Zoom manager gives control to speakers according to an agenda, which reduces the burden on the president to manage the whole job.
- Open the Zoom to members before the meeting starting time. Clark-Skamania holds a "wet fly hour" before the start of its meetings. It allows members to exchange greetings and those with more experience with the software can help those new to Zoom learn to use it.
- Learn the software. Zoom offers easy to follow instruction at its Help Center. Dozens of Zoom experts have posted tutorials on YouTube. Engage a friend to conduct practice meetings in advance of inviting the club. "You've got to put in some effort to work out the bugs so it goes smoothly" said Don Kohler.

The Tongas Under Threat

and other development. The forest serves as an enormous carbon sink, the equivalent of taking 650,000 cars off roads. Logging it would diminish its environmental benefit.

The Roadless Rule, issued by President Clinton in January 2001, prohibits road building and commercial logging in 58 million acres of U.S. for-

ests, including The Tongass.

The Washington State Council of FFI has signed on a letter with Washington Wild of Seattle opposing the repeal of the Roadless Rule in The Tongass.

To learn more about this subject, Google "Tongass National Forest" and you'll read for hours.

Jump

joined the board. I was president, then conservation director. I led outings. I now go to outings. I made some of my best friends through fly fishing with Clark-Skamanian Flyfishers.

Fly fishing is often a solitary pursuit for me around home. The club expanded my home to the Yakima and Klickitat and I began to think of fishing with friends, not just alone. The further we traveled the better the friends became. I caught the biggest trout I've ever landed outside Alaska last month on Oregon's Crane Prairie Reservoir on a fly a friend gave me. Thanks Rick. I'll never leave home without that pattern again.

Another benefit of the club was the education it gave me in conservation. Stream flow, water temperatures, riparian habitat, hatchery management, invasive plants, suction dredging -- the insults to our fisheries go on and on. And then there are the natural events like floods and droughts. Fish need allies not just a few lonely voices. That is one of the biggest benefits of fly fishing clubs. Through numbers, clubs can monitor conditions on rivers and lakes, identify hair-brained management and fight for habitat protection. The outcry over plans to dam the Chehalis River was a good example. As word spread

of the threat to salmon and steelhead spawning habitat, state authorities launched a review and decided to halt the planning.

And there is no better illustration of the conservation power of Fly Fishers International member clubs than last year's rapid fire response to protection of the Shadow Hole on the Grande Ronde River. Led by the Inland Empire Fly Fishers of Spokane and Seattle's Wild Steelhead Coalition clubs in the Washington Council of FFI rallied to raise most of the \$25,000 to purchase the 8-acre access to the Shadow Hole from a private owner and transfer it to public ownership. We got it done in nine short months. Fishers are swinging flies there daily now that steelhead season has arrived.

There's more to do, of course, but that effort was proof positive of what Washington FFI, its member clubs and all fly fishers can accomplish together. Washington lakes and rivers are our home water. Washington FFI clubs can introduce you to those waters and help preserve them too. Washington FFI can accomplish a lot in the future and I'm proud to be part of it. I hope you are too.

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