

FIVE ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO HELP SAVE WILD STEELHEAD

1 Send an e-mail or letter requesting that WDFW have a written management plan in place with the tribes before any river system in the state is open for steelhead fishing.

The WDFW currently fails to complete written management plans with the tribal comanager before steelhead angling begins. When this happens, and a particular steelhead run is projected to be below the escapement goal, **the tribes often fish directly for wild steelhead when there is no harvestable surplus. With no management plans signed before the season starts**, some tribes fish for and kill wild steelhead when there is no harvestable surplus. Without a written management plan, there is limited recourse that can be taken. **During the spring of 2008, Washington's Skagit and Hoh rivers closed early to recreational catch and release fishing, yet the tribes continued to netting wild steelhead into the month of April.**

This year the Skagit will be closed in February and the tribes will continue to harvest wild steelhead. The Skagit River was projected to be well below escapement, and the state and tribes should not have verbally planned for directed fisheries without a written agreement. **The Hoh River also has closed early to sport fishers, even though the tribe took almost 80% percent of the wild fish. These poor harvest practices could have been avoided with a written, enforceable management plan.** Yet, if the tribes continue to net steelhead beyond terms of a signed management plan, violators are vulnerable to court action, including a temporary restraining order.

2 Send an e-mail or letter requesting that sport fishers receive 50% of the harvest surplus of wild steelhead, and that any unharvested portion be allowed to contribute to the spawning population

Send an email or letter to the Fish and Wildlife Commission and the WDFW requesting that sport fishers receive 50% of the harvestable surplus of wild steelhead and that any unharvested portion be allowed to contribute to the spawning population. The past administration of the WDFW (12 years under Director Koenings) was interested in harvest and not wild stock conservation and exchanged sport saved wild steelhead with the tribes to harvest more than the states share of other seafood commodities. That administration also ignored the Fish and Wildlife Commissions policy of saving wild fish for spawning under sport Catch and Release fisheries to be added to the spawning population. Those fish were all harvested by the tribes with WDFW approval. The new Administration under Phil Anderson and Jim Scott has recognized the need to increase the stock size and the number of spawners and is working hard to rebalance the allocation to 50/50. WDFW has run into considerable opposition from tribal fishers and is reluctant to take the issue to court as it may affect harvest sharing in other fisheries. Our unused wild steelhead can provide the wild stocks the chance to rebuild to past, healthier levels. If the tribes keep taking them, the stocks will continue to decline towards depletion a possible

ESA listings. Commodity exchanges has resulted in reduced seasons for anglers, for example, during the 2005/07 Hoh River sport fishing seasons closed early because the tribes would not sign management plans and fished hard because part of our 50% share was needed to help make the spawning escapement level.

3 Get involved in your local Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group.

These local groups are your go-to organizations that provide hands-on opportunities to save wild steelhead and salmon throughout the Pacific Northwest through education, habitat restoration and other programs. In Washington, learn more about your Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/volunteer/index.htm>, or by contacting Diana Ludwig at the WDFW at 360-902-2252 to locate the enhancement group in your region.

4 Join a conservation organization that protects river habitat, wild steelhead and salmon.

Get involved in the organizations advocating for improved management, habitat preservation and recovery, and hatchery reform. This support will give you the background and guidelines you need to speak to legislators, commissioner and agency bios on changes needed to save wild steelhead. If you do become involved, your presence and financial support will go a long ways to help rebuild wild steelhead runs.

5 Pick an issue-be proactive, attend hearings, take some time to be involved.

For example, if you don't like the idea that poaching may take place on closed down rivers? How about organizing a couple of fishing partners and take turns floating a closed river this season and report suspicious activity. Take time to educate your fellow anglers about the importance of protecting wild steelhead and challenge them if they are acting unethical. Attend Commission hearings and make your voice heard!

To take action on these and other important issues affecting wild steelhead, please send comments and concerns to the following officials:

The Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission:
commission@dfw.wa.gov

Washington Gov. Chris Gregoire:
www.governor.wa.gov/contact

Washington's US Sen. Maria Cantwell:
maria_cantwell@cantwell.senate.gov

Washington's US Sen. Patty Murray:
Senator@murray.senate.gov

Find your State Representative:
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/Default.aspx>