

2019-2021 Actions

The recommendations of the Puget Sound Steelhead Advisory Group include a broad suite of conservation, habitat, fishery, and hatchery actions. Implementation of many of these actions will require new funding, independent scientific review, discussions with the tribal comanagers and, in some cases, ESA coverage from NOAA Fisheries. We recognize the necessity of those discussions, and that some action steps may not be immediately implemented. However, we urge that the resources be provided for the following actions in the 2019 -2021 biennium to initiate implementation of the *QuickSilver* portfolio

Fishery Monitoring

- Provide fishery monitoring and enforcement to fully implement the recreational catch & release fishery in the Skagit River (**\$512,000** included in Governor's Enhance Fishing Opportunities budget request).

Hatchery Monitoring

- Collect and analyze genetic samples for early winter hatchery programs as required by NOAA Fisheries for continued operation of the early winter steelhead programs (**\$308,000** included in Governor's Maintain Fishing and Hatchery Production budget request).

Stock Monitoring

- Improve estimates of steelhead returns by implementing sonar counting in two rivers (secure **\$800,000** to implement pilot program).

Tribal Comanagers & ESA Coverage

- Work with tribal comanagers to develop and finalize fishery and hatchery management plans necessary to secure ESA coverage (prioritize within existing resources).

Habitat Protection and Restoration

- Increase activities to ensure clean water and our natural environment for people, steelhead, and Southern Resident Killer Whales (included in Governor's SRKW & Maintain Conservation budget requests).

Steelhead Endorsement

- Assess the feasibility and potential revenue of an endorsement for recreational fishing for steelhead in Puget Sound and the Washington Coast (prioritize within existing resources).

Salish Sea Marine Survival

- Conduct priority studies to assess pinniped predation and improve the survival of juvenile steelhead migrating through Puget Sound (included in Governor's Puget Sound Scientific Research budget request for the Puget Sound Partnership.)

"We must learn from the past, look to the future, and implement an experimental approach to provide for improved management. Fishery, hatchery, and stock monitoring are critically important."

Andy Marks,
Coastal Conservation Association

"Today's hatcheries are managed to have minimal impact on wild steelhead and are recognized in the portfolio as a tool to increase fishing opportunities. That recognition is tremendously important to many recreational anglers."

Al Senyohl, Steelhead Trout Club of Washington

"With renewed will and conservation-oriented management we can restore Puget Sound steelhead runs and optimize angler opportunity, potentially open more rivers, provide longer seasons, and equitably share fisheries through recovery of steelhead in Puget Sound."

Rich Simms & Jonathan Stumpf,
Wild Steelhead Coalition

"Now at less than 5-10% of historical abundance, restoration of steelhead, Washington's official state fish, requires the leadership of WDFW, the cooperation and commitment of key Washington natural resource agencies, and the support of western Washington treaty tribes."

Roger Goodan,
Coastal Conservation Association

"Puget Sound steelhead are threatened with extinction, so we must first do no harm. Responsible recreational fishing will require science-based planning, monitoring, and adaptive management with prudent thresholds that put the recovery of steelhead populations – not just holding the line – above all else."

Jamie Glasgow,
Wild Fish Conservancy

QuickSilver

Restoring Puget Sound Steelhead & Fisheries

Steelhead – the official state fish of Washington

Please support the funding, monitoring, hatchery production, and other actions needed to initiate the *QuickSilver* portfolio, conserve wild steelhead, and restore fishing opportunities.

Puget Sound Steelhead Advisors

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Curt Wilson,
Wildcat Steelhead Club

David Yamashita,
Wildcat Steelhead Club

In 2017 the Puget Sound Steelhead Advisory Group embarked on an unprecedented task - to develop a portfolio of watershed-specific conservation, fishery, and hatchery strategies for Puget Sound steelhead. It was not an easy task. Puget Sound steelhead returns are less than 5-10% of the historical level, and our passion for steelhead had often led to bitter disagreements on the path forward.

But through two years of meetings, more than forty presentations from steelhead experts, and hundreds of hours of challenging discussions, we built a broad consensus for a portfolio of proactive management strategies and actions.

The *QuickSilver* portfolio provides for a future in which wild steelhead are no longer threatened with extinction and are healthy enough to support fishing. A future in which the rich tradition of steelhead fishing is continued and passed on to future generations.

We have come together, and are now asking for your help. Please support the funding, monitoring, and other actions needed to initiate the *QuickSilver* portfolio, conserve wild steelhead, and restore fishing opportunities.

Funding Priorities for 2019-2021

Fishery Monitoring – included in Governor's Enhance Fishing Opportunities package.

Hatchery Monitoring – included in Governor's Hatchery Monitoring package.

Habitat Protection & Restoration – included in Governor's SRKW and Maintain Conservation packages.

Stock Monitoring – \$800,000 to improve estimates of the number of spawning steelhead.





“The truth is we will only have the opportunity to fish for steelhead in Puget Sound – regardless of whether we want to fish for wild or hatchery fish – if we conserve wild steelhead. We believe that management should match the reality of conditions on the ground. We propose using common sense coupled with solid science to direct steelhead management and provide a diverse portfolio of steelhead rivers that achieve both conservation and fishery goals.”

Rob Masonis, Trout Unlimited



CONSERVATION

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES DEPEND ON CONSERVATION OF WILD FISH

Whether you want to participate in a catch & release fishery for wild steelhead, a catch & keep fishery for early winter steelhead, or just want to know that our **State fish** continues to live in our rivers, it all depends on conserving and restoring our wild steelhead. Allowable impact rates under the federal ESA are small, and even fishery and hatchery activities that have minimal effects may not be approved as runs dwindle.

While we can't return to the past, we believe that we can achieve a brighter future for steelhead for this and future generations of anglers. Steelhead are incredibly resilient. They will rebound if given the chance. It is our intent to give them that chance - for the good of our **State fish** - while keeping anglers on the water.

QuickSilver Portfolio - Conservation of Steelhead and a Diversity of Sustainable Fishing Opportunities

The *QuickSilver* portfolio is designed to test management strategies and improve our ability to achieve conservation and fishery objectives. To work, the portfolio requires extensive monitoring of wild steelhead populations, fisheries, and hatcheries to identify necessary management actions.

In the Skagit, for example, we would monitor the length of the recreational season, angler participation, economic benefits, and wild steelhead response to identify potential management changes to further improve the fishery and status of Skagit wild steelhead.

“Steelhead fisheries are an important part of our cultural heritage on the Skagit River, and historically provided an important boost to the local economy. The portfolio is a step toward restoring our steelhead and steelhead fisheries.”

David Yamashita & Curt Wilson, Wildcat Steelhead Club

“Providing a diversity of fishing opportunity is essential to ensure the support of the recreational fishing community. To the extent possible within conservation constraints, the portfolio provides for both catch & release and catch & keep fisheries.”

Mark Spada & Gary Butrim, Fishing Gear Manufacturers

Wild Steelhead Catch & Release Fishery

Manage rivers exclusively for wild steelhead where habitat and the steelhead returns are relatively good.

- Provide recreational catch & release fishing opportunities where consistent with conservation objectives.
- Proposed locations include:
 - Skagit River (implemented 2018)
 - Samish River (new)
 - Nisqually (new, long-term)
 - Skokomish River (new, long-term)
 - Elwha (new, long-term)
- Effective fishery monitoring, conservative fishing regulations, and high compliance with recreational fishing rules are essential to maintain fishing opportunities.

Wild Steelhead Broodstock Hatcheries

Wild steelhead broodstock hatchery programs have potential to be an effective tool for the reintroduction and rebuilding of depleted runs, but must be carefully monitored.

- Test wild broodstock conservation programs in a number of rivers where habitat is relatively good but the steelhead run depleted.
 - Proposed locations include:
 - Cedar River (new)
 - Skokomish (existing)
- If wild broodstock programs prove effective, consider extending the purpose of the programs to provide fishing opportunities (for recreational fisheries, either catch & release or catch & keep).
- Potential locations include:
 - Green River (enhanced)
 - White River (existing)

Steelhead Harvest Hatcheries

Segregated hatchery programs can be used to provide recreational catch & keep fisheries, but they must be operated consistent with the Statewide Steelhead Management Plan and with the federal steelhead recovery plan.

- Segregated hatchery programs must be implemented in a manner to limit genetic and ecological effects to wild steelhead.
- Proposed programs include:
 - Nooksack Early Winter (existing)
 - Snohomish Early Winter (existing)
 - Quilcene Early Winter (new)
 - Dungeness Early Winter (enhanced)
- Segregated programs must be carefully monitored to assess risks to wild steelhead and effectiveness at meeting fishery objectives.