



REGIONAL FISHERIES  
COALITION

# Annual Report

2016-2017



**PROTECTING, RESTORING, AND ENHANCING OUR STATE'S SALMONID RESOURCES**

The Regional Fisheries Coalition is the unified voice of Washington's 14 Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups

[www.regionalfisheriescoalition.org](http://www.regionalfisheriescoalition.org)



# From the Director

“Look at all the fish! It’s magical!”

As my three-year-old exclaimed over the returning salmon in the stream, I felt the wonder once again myself. And while I know that the returns are still low this year, I have also experienced the dedication of many people working hard so that this stream—and streams like it across the state—can have even more fish in the future.

**This report marks another successful year of RFEs working at the community level to protect salmon and their habitat. RFEs completed over 100 projects that turn back the clock on habitat degradation.**

Removing barrier culverts, restoring floodplains, and planting trees all make streams more suitable homes for salmon to return to. At the heart of this work are the dedicated volunteers. They clocked over 50,000 hours planting trees, removing weeds, and improving habitat for all wildlife.

We also reached nearly 60,000 people through education and outreach programs. Many were K-12 students who had the opportunity to get out of the classroom and learn science through hands-on experiences. These projects and programs are important because they bring local people together, encouraging them to work for restoration of their own watersheds. Give us a shout if you would like to be involved!

Thank you for your interest in—and support of—our work.

*Colleen Thompson*

Regional Fisheries Coalition Managing Director



# ENHANCING WASHINGTON'S SALMON & STEELHEAD RESOURCES

Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups (RFEs) were authorized in statute in 1989 to enhance salmon and steelhead resources. Since the first ESA listing in 1991, RFEs have also focused on the recovery of listed stocks.

The 14 RFEs are nonprofit organizations that create partnerships with landowners, tribes, local businesses, volunteers, agencies, and other non-governmental entities. RFEs leverage state investments through securing local, state, federal, and private grants, in addition to donations and in-kind support.

The RFE's primary work areas include:



## HABITAT RESTORATION

We put projects on the ground to restore our watersheds, forests, and shorelines. These projects provide fish passage, lessen flood risk, improve water quality, and increase refuge for fish and other wildlife. We are an important partner in the coordinated statewide strategy to remove an estimated 40,000 barriers to salmon and steelhead spawning and rearing habitat.

1,000+ MILES OF HABITAT ACCESS RESTORED



## EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Educating the next generation through positive outdoor experiences is an important element of restoration. RFEs offer several programs that meet the Next Generation Science Standards by getting students out of the classroom to learn about salmon and the habitat they need to survive. These students grow into adults who make better decisions about fish habitat.

THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS EDUCATED EACH YEAR



## FISHERIES & NUTRIENT ENHANCEMENT

Salmon enhancement activities help recover and conserve the state's naturally spawning salmon populations. Each year, we raise and release thousands of fish to increase sustainable fishing opportunities. We then help to improve essential forest and river food webs by delivering essential nutrients to watersheds in need through carcass distribution.

THOUSANDS OF CARCASSES DISTRIBUTED ANNUALLY



## ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

Tracking and documenting the results of our efforts is essential to our success. We train citizen scientists to help quantify salmon populations and assess the long term impacts of our restoration work. This involves community members directly in salmon recovery in their watersheds, providing increased personal investment in the health of the resource.

DOZENS OF CITIZEN SCIENTISTS ON THE GROUND

# THE RFEEGs

## YOUR WATERSHED SALMON STEWARDS: 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association
- 2. Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group
- 3. Sound Salmon Solutions
- 4. Mid Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group
- 5. South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group
- 6. Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group
- 7. North Olympic Salmon Coalition
- 8. Pacific Coast Salmon Coalition
- 9. Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force
- 10. Willapa Bay Fisheries Enhancement Group
- 11. Lower Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group
- 12. Mid Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group
- 13. Tri-State Steelheaders
- 14. Cascade Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group

“Salmon need healthy habitat if they are going to survive. That’s why collaborative efforts to remove fish passage barriers, and to restore spawning and rearing areas, are so important. In our state, some of the most effective and exciting habitat restoration projects I’ve seen are being implemented by Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups.” –Norm Dicks, Salmon Advocate, U.S. Representative (D-WA, 6th District, 1977–2013)

Across our state, Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups are addressing critical issues facing salmon recovery.

- Fisheries & Nutrient Enhancement.** Rearing salmon and delivering nutrients to spawning grounds.
- Assessment & Monitoring.** Training citizen scientists to help quantify and assess salmon populations.
- Education and Outreach.** Providing hands-on science education for hundreds of K-12 students.
- Habitat Restoration.** Removing barriers that prevent fish from reaching thousands of acres of habitat.



# From the Board President

■ “Investing in habitat restoration makes good economic sense. Every dollar invested in Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups is leveraged—at a rate of about 8 to 1—through volunteers, community contributions, and grants.”

We are truly blessed to live in a beautiful state with abundant natural resources. I spend much of my time outdoors camping, fishing and hunting.

While diminishing salmon returns have provided an unsettling glimpse at a possible future, stories from old timers about the historical bounty of fish and wildlife renew my commitment to saving salmon for my grandkids.

## PROTECTING FISHING & WILD PLACES

I have been on the board of the Regional Fisheries Coalition from its beginning. I volunteered my time in my role as President because I care about protecting one of the greatest assets of the Pacific Northwest.

Of course I want to keep fishing, but I also know that our work to restore and protect fish means preserving the wild areas that our communities depend on for food, clean water, and thriving economies.

## A UNIQUE APPROACH TO RECOVERY

In Washington, restoring our past habitat mistakes begins in our own backyards. Whether it be removing culverts for fish to get upstream, or

rebuilding side channels for them to find refuge from high flows, citizens are working together to get these projects done.

I have seen the ways RFEGs work within their local communities—connecting landowners, volunteers, and partners in meaningful ways. I have also seen the accomplishments of the RFEGs evolve and grow.

In the early years, small-scale fish propagation and riparian projects were the focus. Now, sophisticated habitat restoration projects benefitting multiple species and stakeholders are the norm. Even the small projects are not so small anymore, as they require working with several jurisdictions.

## A CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

As programs compete for limited funds, natural resource areas have been cut to a point at which it is difficult to maintain the status quo. This is at a time when these investments are needed more than ever.

## HABITAT RESTORATION MAKES GOOD ECONOMIC SENSE

Priority habitat projects are not going to get any easier or less expensive



### RFEG PROJECTS = JOBS

Our work requires staffing, environmental consulting, and contracted services across the state.

to complete, but the local approach has been shown to work. Every dollar invested in RFEGs is leveraged—at a rate of 8 to 1—through volunteering, community contributions, and grants.

After working with the RFEGs for the past two decades, my hope remains strong that if we put on our work gloves and hip boots and work together, the fish will once again be abundant in our local streams.

Thank you for your support.

*Larry Zalaznik*  
President of the Board (through 2016)

# 8:1

**RFEGs LEVERAGE STATE DOLLARS AT A RATE OF EIGHT TO ONE**



**The time is now to ramp up our collective investments in habitat.**

The health and sustainability of our fish populations is directly tied to the health of their habitat. We can't rebuild these essential stocks—and conserve sustainable fishing opportunities—without increased investment in restoring their habitat.

Key Accomplishments	Historic Total (Since 1995)	Fiscal Year 2016
Fish Released .....	78,025,421	1,273,300
Fish Passage Projects Completed .....	856	21
Miles of Streams Opened .....	1,118	22
Miles of Restoration .....	661	119
Carcasses Distributed .....	1,668,752	39,364
Salmon Projects Completed .....	3,831	103
Volunteer Hours .....	2,954,376	50,798

  

Funds and Funds Leveraged	(Since 1995)	
State/Federal RFEG Funds .....	\$30,697,236	\$1,230,485
Funds Leveraged .....	\$197,783,983	\$12,525,846
Value of Volunteer Hours .....	\$24,837,505	\$1,145,495
<b>Total Match .....</b>	<b>\$225,707,871</b>	<b>\$13,671,341</b>



RFEGs create jobs, wages, and economic activity through habitat restoration projects.



It is estimated that for every \$100k invested in salmon restoration, 1.57 jobs are created.



Quality habitat supports a robust fishery, which in turn generates economic activity.

■ **“There is a lot of heavy lifting that takes place to get a salmon recovery project off the ground—many hands and minds working together to make it happen—but one element that cannot be disputed is the terrific work that our RFEGs do to bring the community together, all stakeholders, to ensure a seamless project from beginning to completion.”**

–Nancy Biery, Salmon Recovery Funding Board Member

Visit us online: [www.regionalfisheriescoalition.org](http://www.regionalfisheriescoalition.org)

Developed in coordination with the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, 2016

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Base funding for the RFEG program comes from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s *Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program*, a portion of state commercial and recreational fishing license fees, and excess egg and carcass sales administered by the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife.

*Publication design by Matterhorn Creative: [www.matterhorncreative.com](http://www.matterhorncreative.com)*



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