

Metro Reconnection

Kellogg Creek Dam is Coming Down

The Kellogg Creek Restoration & Community Enhancement Project took a crucial step forward last fall, when the City of Milwaukie, Oregon Department of Transportation, North Clackamas Watershed Council, and American Rivers initiated the scoping, design, and permitting process for the removal of Kellogg Creek Dam. In addition to dam removal, plans include the restoration of the stream channel and floodplain in the former lake bed and expanded public access to a 14-acre natural area.

Though dam removal and stream restoration can be especially challenging in densely-populated areas like Milwaukie, it can also be especially rewarding. Besides restoring access for native winter steelhead and coastal cutthroat trout to 16 miles of habitat, dam removal promises another kind of reconnection.

The removal of Kellogg Creek Dam will return a free-flowing stream and wild,

native fish to a Portland-Metro community. Once the project is complete, Milwaukie residents will have immediate access to nature, schools will have a local outdoor educational area, and organizations like Native Fish Society will have an opportunity to introduce new people to the wonders of wild fish in their Portland-Metro homewaters.

“You can absolutely have meaningful habitat in urban areas if you’re willing to work at it!”

— LIZ PERKIN, NFS REGIONAL COORDINATOR

The last time Kellogg Creek ran free, Oregon wasn’t yet a state. But by 2026, the dam that has obstructed its ecological processes for more than a century will be gone. Water temperatures will drop, a plume of cool water will refresh the mainstem Willamette, and one more Pacific Northwest stream will be reconnected for the good of native fish, the local community, and the homewaters we all depend on.



In addition to supporting native populations of winter steelhead and coastal cutthroat trout, Kellogg Creek provides a crucial thermal refuge for juvenile winter steelhead and spring Chinook salmon—both listed under the Endangered Species Act—as they migrate down the Willamette River to the Pacific.

In addition to sitting on the Kellogg Creek Restoration and Community Enhancement Project’s Technical Advisory Committee, Native Fish Society has active campaigns throughout the Willamette River Basin.

To learn more about the NFS Molalla Watershed Restoration Campaign, the NFS ReWild the Willamette Campaign, and other NFS Campaigns, visit nativefishsociety.org



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NATIVE FISH SOCIETY is a non-profit organization that exists to cultivate the groundswell of public support needed to revive abundant wild fish, free-flowing rivers, and thriving local communities.

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NATIVE FISH SOCIETY

STRONG RUNS

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The Cornerstone of the Elwha

Wild Abundance on the Elwha Starts with Healthy Chum

At the turn of the twentieth century, chum salmon were the second-most abundant salmon species in the Elwha River. After the construction of Elwha and Glines Canyon dams, in 1911 and 1927, respectively, fishery managers used hatcheries to tinker with the Elwha’s wild abundance. Prioritizing the production of more desirable species, they inverted the proportions of native salmon and steelhead runs. Cut off from their native spawning habitat, Elwha chum declined to about 1% of their historic numbers.

A century later, the dams came down. By September 2014, the Elwha’s fall salmon runs had unimpeded access to more than 70 miles of previously-blocked habitat. But rather than reflecting habitat types and carrying capacities of the relatively pristine basin, the runs continue to reflect the contributions of two hatch-

eries on the lower river. The Elwha’s native chum, the cornerstone of the river’s wild abundance, continue to struggle.

Juvenile chum salmon rely heavily on healthy estuaries, deltas, and nearshore habitat. Compared to other Pacific salmon, the young of the year spend little time in their natal streams. Instead, they migrate to brackish and saltwater in their first year of life and take up residence in estuaries, deltas, and nearshore habitats for several weeks or longer.

“Until (Elwha River chum salmon) are properly addressed and restored, the watershed will continue to struggle.”

— ANNE SHAFFER, COASTAL WATERSHED INSTITUTE

Three miles upstream of the Elwha estuary, two hatcheries release as many as 3.5 million Chinook, coho, and steelhead each year. The timing—March through June—coincides with the residence of wild chum in these crucial habitats, making interactions between hatchery-reared salmon and wild chum inevitable. It’s no great logical leap to suppose that the trophic disruptions caused by mass releases of hatchery

smolts, well-documented elsewhere, are impacting the Elwha nearshore and disrupting the native life history patterns of wild Elwha chum.

Hatchery programs may be undermining the Elwha’s wild chum populations. Given the crucial role that chum play in ecosystem function, weakened chum runs may well be undermining watershed recovery as a whole. Each year, chum runs drive nutrient cycling by acting as a cross-boundary nutrient source—they carry rich marine nutrients upstream. Strong chum populations have the capacity to transform riparian structure, increase plant diversity, and enrich the food web from top to bottom.

This article draws on the scientific research and advocacy work of Anne Shaffer, Executive Director and Lead Scientist at The Coastal Watershed Institute in Port Angeles, Washington.

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Visit nativefishsociety.org to learn how you can support our efforts to protect native fish and restore wild abundance throughout the Pacific Northwest.



‘Homewaters: Run Wild’ 30th Anniversary Annual Benefit Banquet & Auction

A guaranteed good time for a great cause!

WHEN
Saturday, April 12th, 2025

WHERE
The Loft at 8th Avenue
Portland, OR

WHAT
A banquet and auction supporting the revival of wild, native fish, free-flowing rivers, and thriving local communities.



A Fraught Timeline

The History of a Deadbeat Dam

“We are blessed to have these rivers here in Oregon and all that they do for us. Let us not take them for granted.”
— FRANK MOORE

Native Fish Society, as part of a coalition of more than 20 conservation, fishing, and whitewater groups, is working toward the removal of Winchester Dam on Oregon's North Umpqua River. The sole purpose of the deteriorating deadbeat dam is to provide a private waterski lake for surrounding landowners. Winchester not only inhibits fish passage to an estimated 160 miles of high-quality habitat upstream, but also presents a very real threat to people and communities downstream.

Since purchasing the dam in 1969, Winchester Water Control District has shown a disregard for wild, native fish, a healthy North Umpqua River, and the communities that depend on both. In fact, until January 2020, there is no record of consequences for dam owners who have conducted regular, extensive, and unpermitted work in one of Oregon's beloved salmon and steelhead streams for half a century.

1890

Oregon's North Umpqua River is dammed at the community of Winchester. The structure, dubbed Winchester Dam, provides power to the town of Roseburg until 1923.

1945

A fish ladder is constructed for migrating salmon and steelhead. That 79-year-old fish ladder is the same one still in use today.

1965

Following a flood, former dam owners abandon Winchester's already-obsolete power facilities.

1969

Winchester Water Control District buys Winchester Dam for one dollar. Though an Oregon statute requires water control districts to provide a public purpose, like hydroelectricity, irrigation, or flood control, WWCD is formed solely for recreation. Since 1969, Winchester Dam's sole purpose is to maintain a private reservoir for waterskiing.

2019

State officials, at the behest of WWCD, decline an offer from fishing and conservation groups to fully fund an independent analysis of the fish ladder at Winchester Dam.

1994

An Oregon conservation group released a report titled "15 Damnable Dams." Thirty years later, at least three dams featured in that report have come down. But Winchester remains.

1987

Winchester Dam receives its most-recent comprehensive structural inspection. In the three decades since, no such inspections will be conducted. All the while, WWCD ignores repeated requests to update an Emergency Action Plan for the dam—a state requirement.

2020

Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality levies a nearly \$60,000 fine against the Winchester Water Control District for environmental violations during a 2018 repair at Winchester Dam. The repair attempt degraded river habitat, killed fish, and polluted drinking water in the City of Roseburg and the Umpqua Basin Water Association.

2021

The Steamboaters, WaterWatch of Oregon, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen, and Native Fish Society sue the Winchester Water Control District in federal court.



A Time to Celebrate!

The Klamath Flows Free

This fall marked the end of the dam-removal phase of the largest salmon restoration project in U.S. history. With the Klamath River returned to its natural path, we've taken a major step toward the restoration of abundant wild fish and a healthy ecosystem in the Klamath River Basin.

With all four dams—JC Boyle, Iron Gate, Copco No. 1, and Copco No. 2—now gone, the Klamath's native salmon runs once again have access to more than 400 miles of habitat. The reservoirs, which once provided ideal conditions for toxic blooms of blue-green algae, are gone. And the Klamath Basin—a watershed that once supported the third-largest salmon fishery in the continental United States—has taken a crucial step toward the recovery of those historic runs.

There is important work yet to be done. With dam removal complete, the work turns to stabilizing and restoring formerly-submerged land, ensuring

long-term recovery for the wildlife and communities that depend on it. Land along the mainstem Klamath and some of its important tributaries will require restoration and monitoring until the streamside vegetation is reestablished—a process will take several years. But this fall, with all four dams gone, wild fish and river lovers everywhere have a reason to celebrate.

“Another wall fell today. The dams that have divided the basin are now gone and the river is free. Our sacred duty to our children, our ancestors, and for ourselves, is to take care of the river, and today's events represent a fulfillment of that obligation.”

— FRANKIE MYERS, YUOK TRIBE VICE CHAIRMAN

With all four dams on the lower Klamath River completely removed, the dam removal process has officially come to a close. Today marks the first time in a century that the Klamath's wild, native fish have unimpeded access to more than 400 miles of stream habitat.

A special thank you goes out to the Karuk, Yurok, Hoopa Valley, and Klamath tribes for their leadership and their tireless advocacy. We'd also like to thank Shane Anderson, Jason Hartwick, and Swiftwater Films for their efforts in capturing the dam removal process in its entirety. Check out swiftwaterfilms.com to learn more about their important work. And, because it takes all of us to restore native fish, free-flowing rivers, and thriving communities throughout the Pacific Northwest, THANK YOU to everyone who fought for a free-flowing Klamath River.

However critical, dam removal is only the first step toward the recovery of the Klamath River and the restoration of abundant wild fish. That's why NFS River Steward Andy Marx has been working to secure minimum instream flows on the Shasta River, an important Klamath tributary, as well as advocating for fish passage to Little Springs, a key source of cold water in the upper Shasta watershed.

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