



NW Opportunity

Wild, Anadromous Fish Recovery & Lower Snake River Restoration

Our organization has continued to highlight a message of urgency to our elected leaders related to Lower Snake River dam (LSRD) removal and salmon recovery. We've also supported and participated in grassroots efforts across the region alongside our partners who have kept wild salmon and steelhead at the forefront of regional issues.

This summer, Senator Patty Murray and Governor Jay Inslee of Washington released a draft report that examined the feasibility of replacing the services provided by the four LSRDs in eastern Washington. In addition to providing detailed comments on the report ourselves, we engaged our members via "River RAT" advocacy webinars and outreach, contributing to 70,000 comments generated across regional and national partner organizations in support of dam breaching and investment in replacement services.

IRU's engagement with the federal government, during a stay in the long-running litigation surrounding wild salmon paralleled the Washington state process. The Biden Administration held discussions with regional stakeholders and federal agencies which have released several analyses on salmon restoration and LSRD replacement power generation portfolios over the last year. This fall, IRU along with co-plaintiffs representing fishing and conservation groups, the state of Oregon, and the Nez Perce Tribe, requested a stay in litigation for another year. This effort is contingent upon the federal government delivering on its commitments to restore salmon populations, honor commitments with Tribal Nations, deliver affordable and reliable clean power, and meet the needs of stakeholders across the region.

In the fall, the final Murray-Inslee report and their recommendations reiterated what salmon advocates have stood for throughout the year: dam breaching is vital to the persistence and potential recovery of wild salmon populations in Idaho, status-quo operations are unacceptable, and an urgent need for action related to investment in the region's transportation network and clean energy projects.

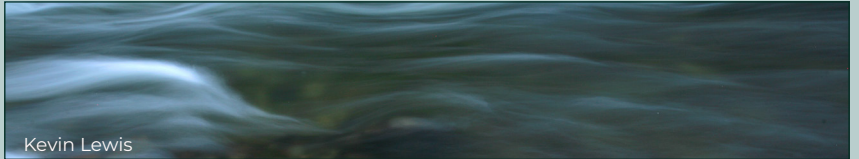
This year IRU also had the opportunity to be the conservation partner for a grassroots advocacy initiative, "The Grand Salmon Source to Sea" campaign, where four women paddled over 1,000 miles from multiple Salmon River headwaters to the Pacific Ocean. Their tremendous efforts engaged river communities, youth groups, and Tribes along their route and generated attention on dam removal and salmon recovery from thousands of people nationwide.

Looking ahead, members of Congress and the Administration have engaged in salmon recovery and dam removal yetbut meaningful action has yet to be undertaken. IRU and our allies will maintain critical pressure on elected officials to identify and allocate funding for projects that will enable the barge-rail line and clean energy transitions necessary to make removal of the LSRDs a reality. More than ever, your voice and advocacy for wild salmon will be needed to ensure the region quickly and efficiently moves towards dam removal. (Photo by EcoFlight).



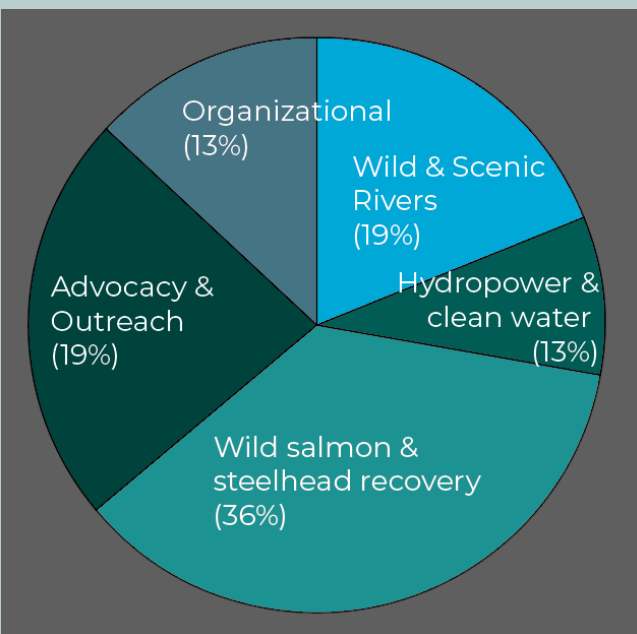
Idaho Rivers United Members & Partners of 2022

IRU's annual awards recognize outstanding members, businesses, and partners who further IRU's mission and campaigns. We are honored to present this year's award recipients.



- Member of the Year:** Rick Rupp
- Business Partner of the Year:** The Riverside Hotel (Boise, ID)
- Salmon Advocate of the Year:** The Grand Salmon Source to Sea team
- Water Protection Advocate:** Jimmy Grossman
- Conservation Partner of the Year:** Rivers for Change

Your Investment at Work



Brooke Hess

Looking Downstream...

As 2022 comes to an end, we look downstream with hope for what next year will bring in river conservation – meaningful progress in securing Lower Snake dam removal as a part of the largest river restoration project in American history. In more than a thirty year battle, there has never been more momentum than now around Lower Snake River dam removal. As climate change continues to be the overarching threat to all of the wild fish populations and river systems we strive to protect, there is a sense of urgency, to stay the course, as well as persistence to stay the course, resilient of setbacks – just as wild salmon do.

Our rivers are the freshwater veins of Idaho and the Northwest – pulsing and running through landscapes and communities, while connecting all of us to the environment. Our work will continue to be guided by scientific research and data, while also understanding the significance of cultural relationships to salmon, our iconic keystone species. IRU continues to value and prioritize Tribal partnerships, and we believe that traditional ecological knowledge of salmon is critical in our recovery efforts. We also recognize the need for more access and equity in our work, and continue to make it a priority in our organization.

Your membership to IRU shows your commitment to conservation and protection of Idaho's most valuable resources – free flowing rivers and abundant salmon populations. If you love a river, we need your support to continue to prioritize healthy streams, ecosystems, and landscapes throughout Idaho. We wish you a healthy and happy rest of the year and look forward to working together to protect and restore the rivers of Idaho – now and for future generations. Thank you for joining us.

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To protect and restore the rivers and fisheries of Idaho.



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Fall Creek, SE Salmon River, Nick Kumath

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A Message from the Executive Director

“A trout stream is only a trout stream when it’s flowing between two banks, at its own pace, and in its own sweet way.” I wish that I could take credit for that beautiful piece of writing, but for all the eloquent prose that the evocative book, “The River Why,” by David James Duncan features, it’s this sentence that seems to reverberate each time I read it. It distills the work that Idaho Rivers United works to perform to its corpus – at the foundation, it’s to keep our rivers free-flowing, clean, and ecologically sound.

This past year we’ve seen and challenged mining claims, exploration, and project proposals at an alarming rate; we’ve witnessed both Congressional and Executive action on salmon and steelhead recovery; and we’ve begun a renewed push for overdue Wild and Scenic designations for our “whitewater state.” In addition to our great conservation work, IRU was busy in D.C., working with Congressional offices and administrative agency staff to help salmon recovery efforts, reform the Federal Power Act to help modernize hydropower licensing (and most importantly, the path to decommissioning), and discuss pathways to reform the antiquated Mining Act of 1872.

Our work, much like a river system, runs well past the borders of Idaho. We also advocated for positive water solutions that are climate resilient, cost-effective, and river-friendly. We supported legislation to make water conservation a way of life in Idaho, promoted sustainable conservation solutions through a series of opinion editorials around the state, and built grassroots support for these positive solutions through our network of River RATs.

Today, IRU is stronger than it has ever been, and in 2022, through the board and staff, have begun developing the strategic framework for the next five years of conservation and advocacy work. When we spend more time on rivers, we become better stewards and better advocates for their protection. Our vision is that Idaho’s remaining wild and free-flowing rivers stay that way, our developed rivers are restored to function and flourish, that the public has equitable access to rivers for recreation, and that river enthusiasts are active and effective advocates. This plan should be finalized in early 2023 and we are excited to share it with you all.

We are proud of our accomplishments in 2022 and our record of protecting rivers over the last thirty plus years. The key to our success is the strong backing from you, our members; it is only through your support that we are able to advocate so effectively for river stewardship. No organization does a better job, or is more committed to protecting and restoring the rivers you love. Through your support and advocacy, work for restored wild fish populations and permanently protected, healthy rivers in Idaho that may be resilient to a changing climate and support our communities. We hope you enjoy the report, and that it motivates you to give back to the waters that enrich our lives and spirit.

Nic Nelson
IRU Executive Director

IDAHO RIVERS UNITED 2022

Engagement & Accomplishments

Paddling community & river advocacy events
~ 2,000 attendees

9,000 comments submitted via IRU to government officials for salmon & steelhead recovery

6 educational events
~ 500 youth engaged

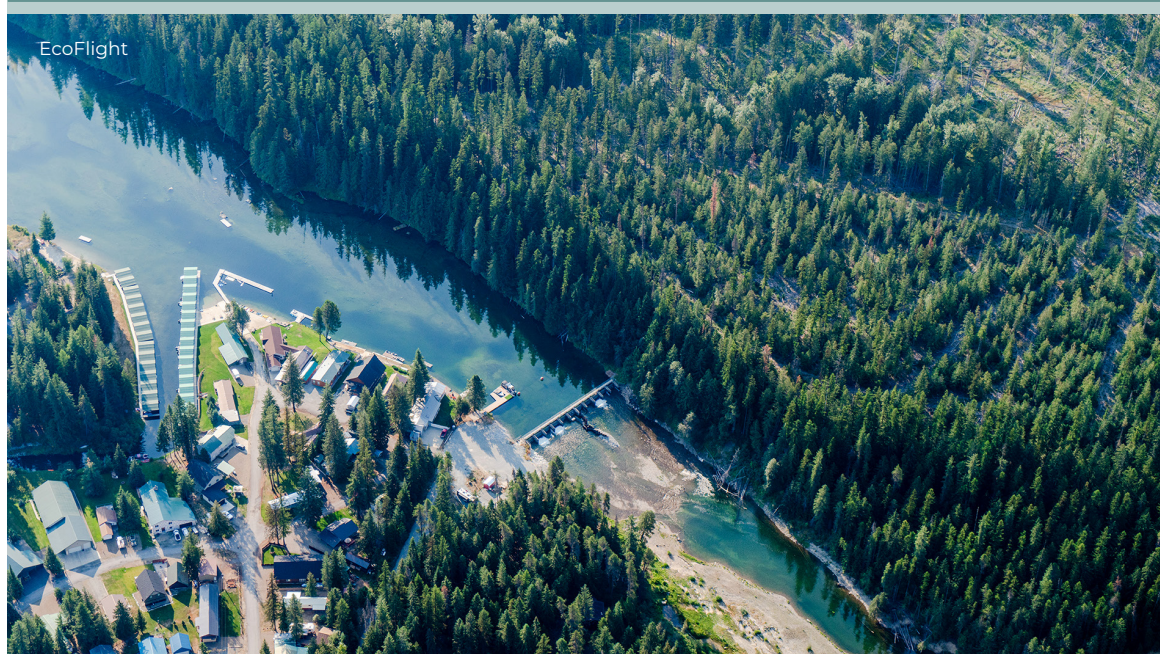
300 new members since 2020

Inaugural Brewshed Festival
~ 700 attendees

46 letters & technical documents submitted to Members of Congress & agency staff

Official Conservation Partner of “The Grand Salmon Source to Sea” campaign
~ 300,000 engaged nationwide

Four EcoFlights over threatened watersheds



Hydropower Reform

Idaho Rivers United’s hydropower work and our commitment to mitigating the impacts to our river systems continues to be a top priority of our organization. In 2022, through our involvement with the Hydropower Reform Coalition, we helped draft a package for Members of Congress on reform of the Federal Power Act; this was done in coordination with conservation and Tribal partners as well as industry representatives such as the National Hydropower Association. Key pieces of this package include increasing Tribal authority over hydropower projects on reservation land, as authority and opportunities for federally recognized Tribes with treaty rights to protect fish and wildlife resources in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensing process. Such treaty rights often cover land outside reservations.

In addition to this work, we have also been educating members of Congress on greenhouse gas emissions from hydropower projects – dispelling the myth that hydro is greenhouse gas (GHG) emission free. In order to truly meet global climate goals, a complete and accurate accounting of GHG emissions must be quantified and addressed. Oftentimes, the emissions from a hydropower plant can rival or even surpass those of a coal-fired power plant. Finally, we are working on helping streamline the FERC process to decommission dams that have either outlived their useful life or are having significant deleterious effects on aquatic ecosystems.



Mining Mitigation Efforts & Protecting the South Fork Salmon River Watershed

This year we have seen an increase in mining activity across the state that has kept our staff busy assessing the risks and keeping the public informed. While new technology has been in the spotlight to help create a more sustainable future, the mining industry has been quick to capitalize on this opportunity by calling for more mines to produce more minerals.

Despite this increased statewide pressure, we are proud of the wins we were able to secure in our mining work. Our staff submitted substantial comments on a number of new projects around the state. Additionally, through an objection resolution with the Forest Service, we successfully kept exploratory drilling sites out of the Wild and Scenic River corridor of the Main Salmon near the confluence of the Middle Fork. Our conservation associates also toured a number of sites on the ground and by air, including a visit to an exploratory drilling site near the Jarbidge River to get a firsthand look at mitigation measures, required through a previous IRU resolution process, as the project entered its closure and reclamation phase.

This summer the Biden Administration embarked on the long overdue task of evaluating our nation’s severely antiquated and out-of-touch laws that govern hard rock mining for many of these highly sought-after minerals. The Mining Reform Interagency Group held a number of listening sessions with members of conservation organizations, the mining industry, and other stakeholders. Along with numerous national and regional partners, our organization submitted letters to members of Congress urging reform of this antiquated mining law, including closing loopholes to the Clean Water Act for hardrock mining and creating good samaritan policies for organizations to participate in cleanup and remediation.

As Idaho continues to find itself in the crosshairs of the mining industry for new projects, we remain focused on the Stibnite Gold Project outside of Yellow Pine, ID. This project is one of our highest priorities and the source of extreme concern related to the potential negative impacts that would be inflicted upon the resident and anadromous Endangered Species Act listed fish populations, wild and scenic river values, water quality, and Indigenous sovereignty.

At the end of October, the Forest Service released the Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Stibnite Gold Project. During the public comment period, our staff hosted a number of public workshops and events to help our members stay informed and be involved in this project (comment submission deadline is in early 2023). Thank you to all of our members who support our work and continue to join us in our efforts to protect Idaho’s waterways and natural resources from the destruction that is often left as a byproduct of these mining projects.