



Friends of the Clearwater
PO Box 9241, Moscow ID 83843
foc@friendsoftheclearwater.org
www.friendsoftheclearwater.org

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ADVOCATES DECLARE A SALMON SANCTUARY IN IDAHO'S CLEARWATER BASIN

Moscow, Idaho—Local wildlife advocates declare the tributaries of the Clearwater River Basin a sanctuary for salmon and cold-water fish, vital for the survival of the species in the region.

While salmon and steelhead advocates have rightly called for the removal of the Lower Snake River Dams to recover salmonid populations, these fish must still have quality habitat to which they will return. **These are the waterways of the newly declared *Salmon Sanctuary*.**

The headwaters of the Clearwater, Lochsa, and Selway rivers contain some of the best natal habitat for salmon in the United States. North-central Idaho has been called the “Noah’s Ark” for salmon, in regards to the quality of its cold, clean, high-elevation waterways. These waterways will only increase in importance as the West enters an era of warmer, more unpredictable weather.

For the past forty years, Friends of the Clearwater (FOC) has worked to protect native fish spawning, rearing, and migratory habitat throughout Clearwater Country. Today FOC launches a Salmon Sanctuary Initiative (SSI) expanding our efforts. **Please see the attached files for more information.**

At Extinctions Door

Today the once famous Clearwater River wild B-run steelhead face extinction. No other word adequately expresses this reality. Wild spring/summer Chinook are already extinct in the Clearwater basin, driven out by the Lewiston dam (1927-1973).

In the early 1960s, more than 40,000 wild steelhead crossed that dam four miles upstream from the river’s mouth. Today, fisheries managers project just 2,400 wild B-run steelhead will return to the entire Columbia River basin, the worst return ever projected.

In 2025, American Rivers declared the Clearwater River and its tributaries the 7th most endangered river system in the United States. The national organization cited the planned four-fold expansion of commercial logging prescribed in the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forests’ 2025 Land Management Plan as a major driver of fish habitat loss, chiefly through increased sediment loads from road building and future mass failures, disrupted ecosystems with decreased biological diversity, and the potential loss of stream connectivity. Acute damages from dredge mining pose yet another threat. Meanwhile, rapid climate change is also harming native fish habitat throughout the region.

You are invited to direct any questions you might have regarding this initiative to Kyran Kunkel, FOC Executive Director, at the email address/phone number below.

Kyran Kunkel PhD
Executive Director, Friends of the Clearwater
kyran@friendsoftheclearwater.org
208-882-9755