

From the President

By Deene Almvig

It seems just a few months ago I was writing my first president's report and now, two years later, I'm writing my last. So, what has happened in this time span? Have we turned the salmonid returns to the returns of the forties and fifties, or even the eighties and nineties? For me, the answer is no, not even close. Coho, chum, pink, sockeye, Chinook, and steelhead populations are all declining with the possible exception of spring Chinook, where increased hatchery production and a harvest moratorium have resulted in a short net and recreational fishery. Does this mean the past fifteen plus years of river rehabilitation have been less than desired? From my perspective natural salmonid recovery is yet to be determined. However, we know some good changes are occurring:

- Finney Creek water temperatures are declining due to river narrowing resulting from engineered log jams and increased canopy cover.
- Stream and river water is cleaner and less turbid because of riparian plantings and fencing which excludes livestock and the waste they create.
- Miles of spawning habitat have been added because of the removal of failing culverts that do not allow fish passage, replaced with structures that do.
- Education and outreach programs that have increased public awareness of the value and means to protect our salmonids through volunteer efforts, landowner cooperation, workshops, publications, and the Junior Stream Stewards program.
- Every year several thousand salmon carcasses obtained from the Marblemount Hatchery are returned to Skagit River tributaries, providing nutrients for salmon fry as they come out of their redds.

It took fifty or more years of habitat degradation, over harvesting, and poor ocean conditions to get us where we are. If it takes fifty years to correct the problem, we must attempt it. It is a must-do situation! Our future well-being depends upon it because of the value of the resource and the secondary effects of water quality.

On another note, I would like to inform you who our new officers are. Bruce Freet, who has been the board vice president, has been elected president. Jeanne Glick has accepted the vice president position, Dan Ballard is continuing as treasurer, and Ned Currence continues as secretary. These people are exceptional leaders; SFEG is in very good hands.