

Status of steelhead in Washington

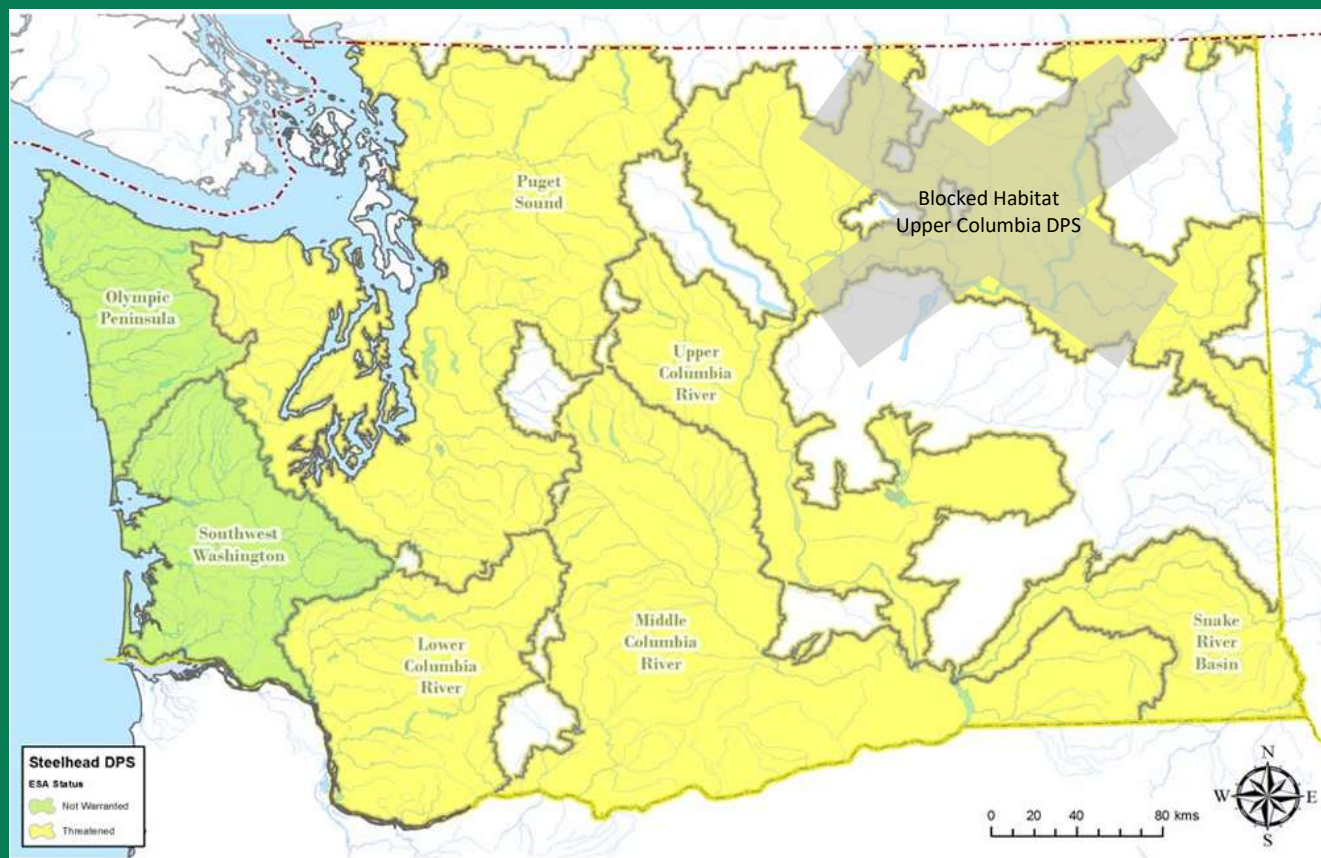
Bethany Craig
Neala Kendall
Thomas Buehrens

2025 Pacific Coast Steelhead
Management Meeting
December 9, 2025



Steelhead Distinct Population Segments in Washington

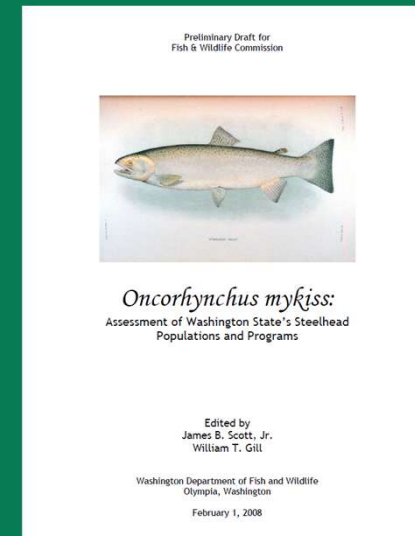
- 7 DPSs
 - 5 Listed under ESA
 - 2 Not
 - Olympic Peninsula DPS petitioned for listing August 2022; under consideration by NOAA
- Summer run in interior Columbia DPSs
- Both summer and winter run in western DPSs



Washington State steelhead management

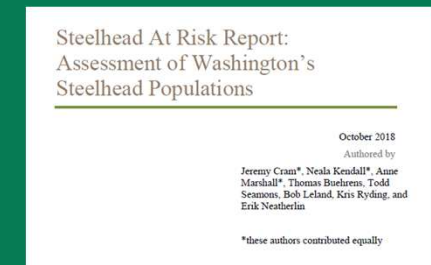
2008 Statewide Steelhead Management Plan

- Prioritize maintaining and restoring abundance, productivity, diversity, and distribution of wild steelhead and their habitats in Washington State
- Guides management including fisheries, hatchery production and reforms, habitat actions



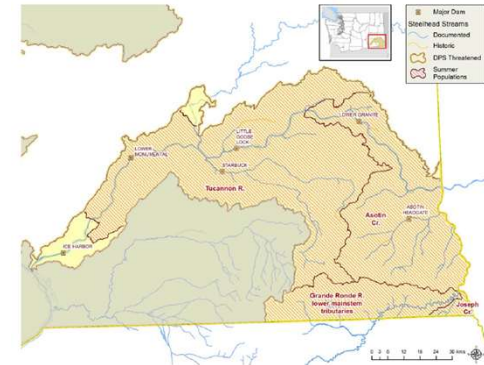
2018 Steelhead at Risk Report

2024 State of Salmon in Watersheds

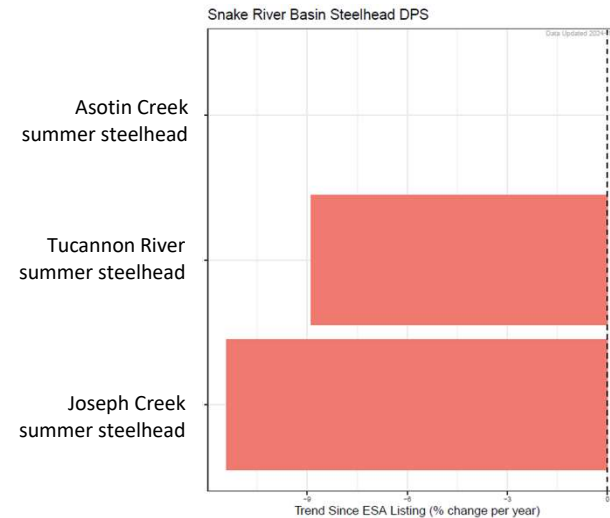
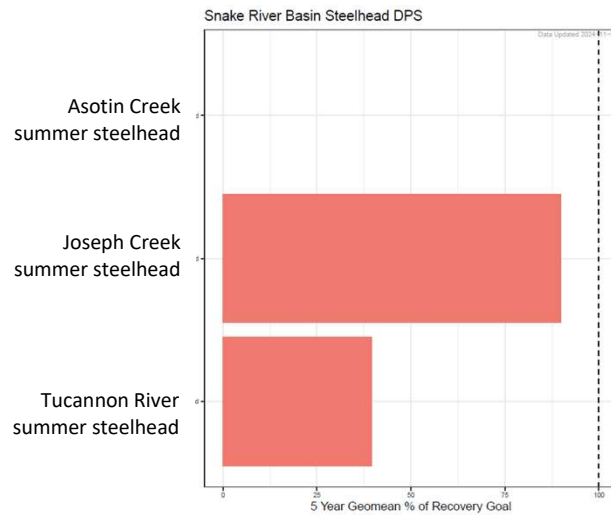


Snake River

- ESA: **threatened (1997)**
- NOAA 2022 Biological Viability Assessment Update: **moderate risk of extinction**
- WDFW 2024 State of Salmon abundance status and trends: **not keeping pace**



From WDFW 2018. Steelhead at risk report: assessment of Washington's steelhead populations.

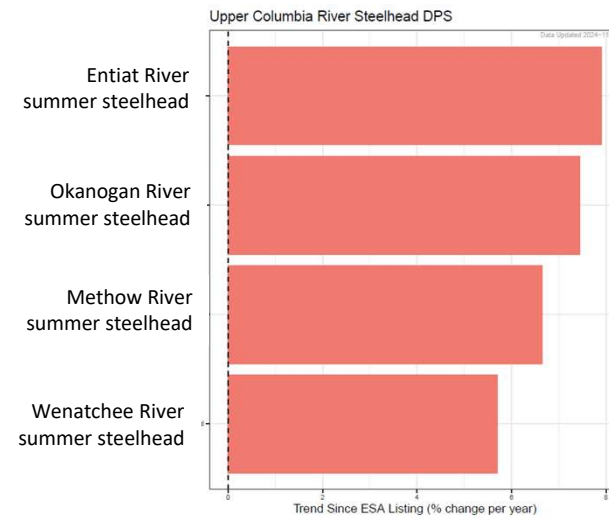
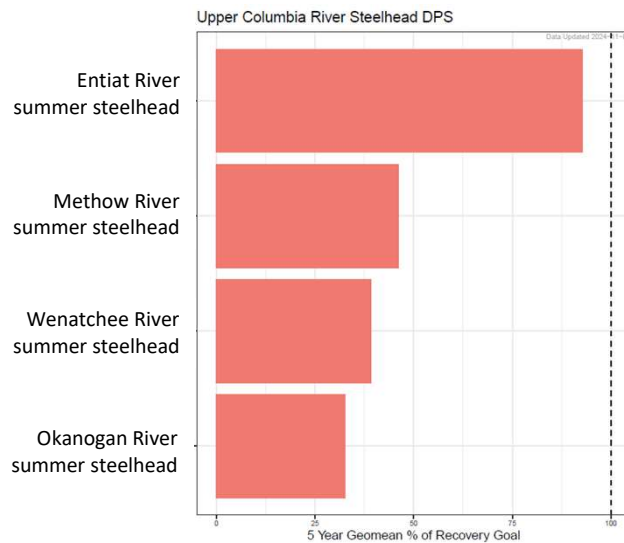


Upper Columbia

- ESA: **endangered (1997), threatened (2006)**
- NOAA 2022 Biological Viability Assessment Update: **high risk of extinction**
- WDFW 2024 State of Salmon abundance status and trends: **making progress**
- Hatchery supplementation with integrated, local broodstock

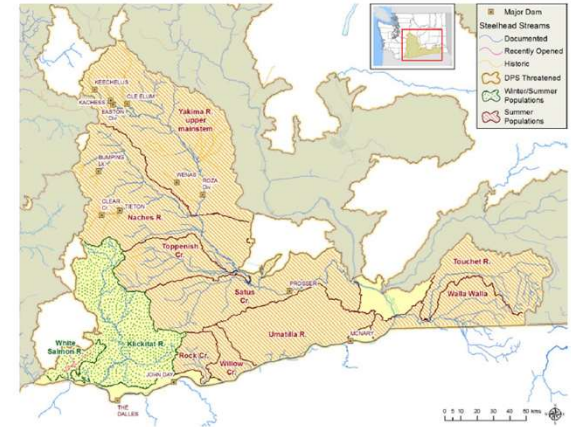


From WDFW 2018. Steelhead at risk report: assessment of Washington's steelhead populations.

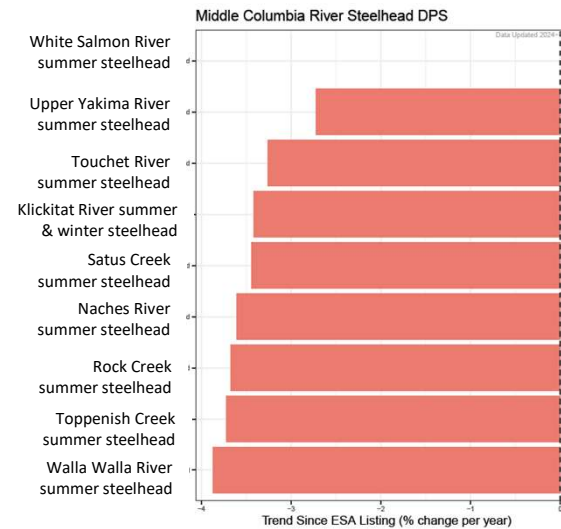
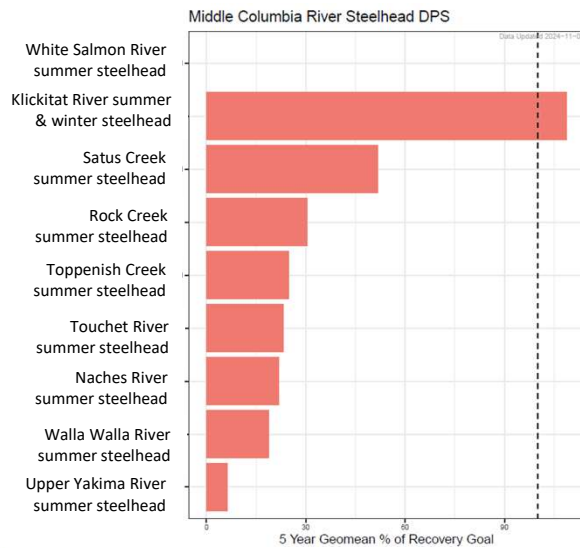


Middle Columbia

- ESA: **threatened (1999)**
- NOAA 2022 Biological Viability Assessment Update: **moderate risk of extinction**
- WDFW 2024 State of Salmon abundance status and trends: **in crisis**



From WDFW 2018. Steelhead at risk report: assessment of Washington's steelhead populations.

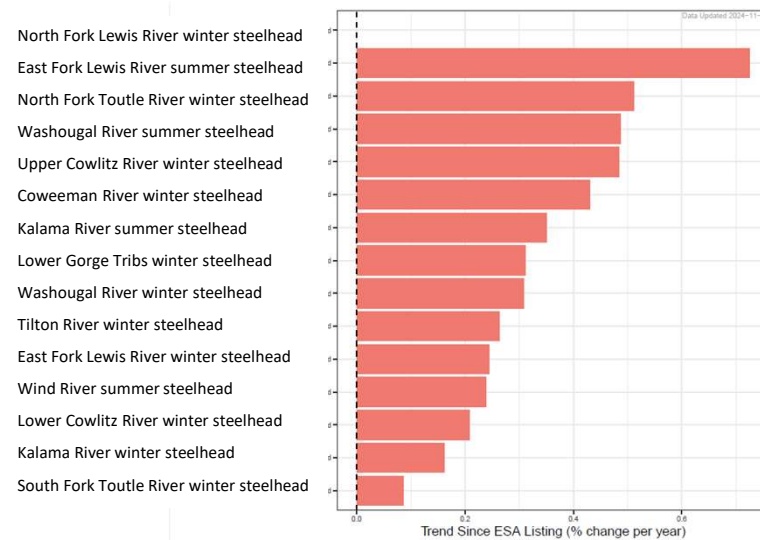
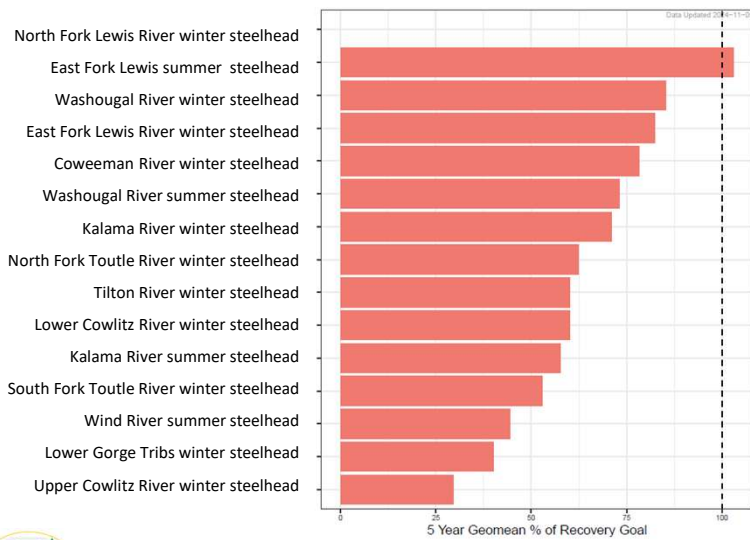


Lower Columbia

- ESA: **threatened (1998)**
- NOAA 2022 Biological Viability Assessment Update: **moderate risk of extinction**
- WDFW 2024 State of Salmon abundance status and trends: **making progress**



From WDFW 2018. Steelhead at risk report: assessment of Washington's steelhead populations.



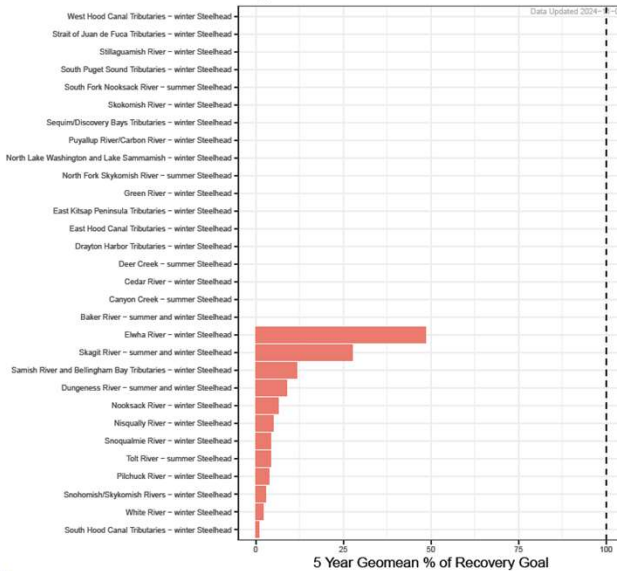
Puget Sound

- ESA: **threatened (2007)**
- NOAA 2022 Biological Viability Assessment Update: **moderate risk of extinction**
- WDFW 2024 State of Salmon abundance status and trends: **in crisis**
- Skagit River wild catch & release fishery
- Hatchery reforms

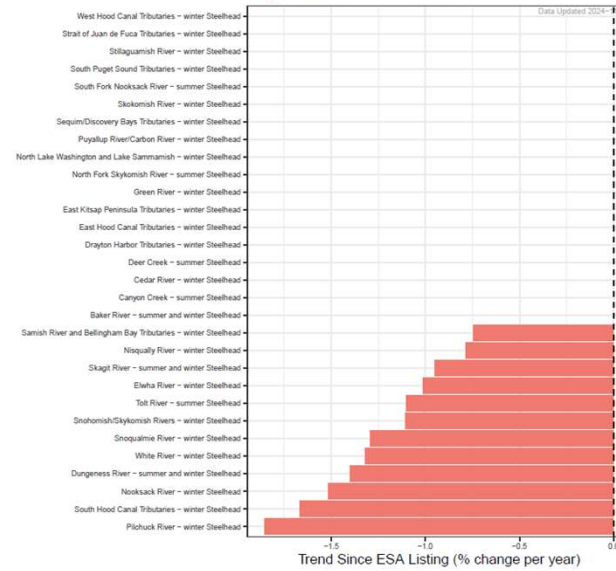


From WDFW 2018. Steelhead at risk report: assessment of Washington's steelhead populations.

Puget Sound Steelhead DPS



Puget Sound Steelhead DPS

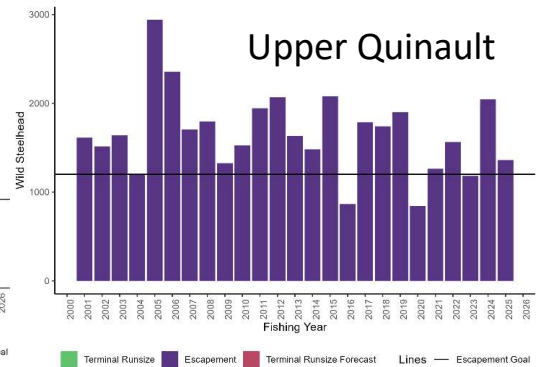
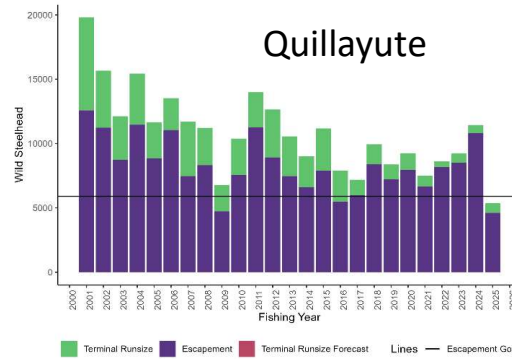
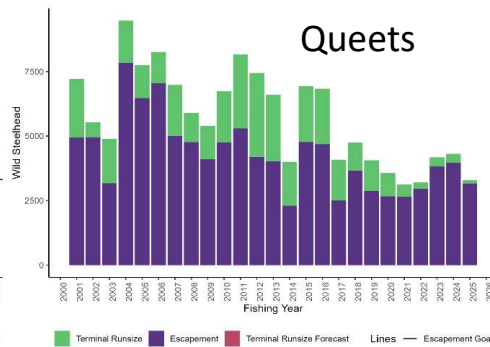
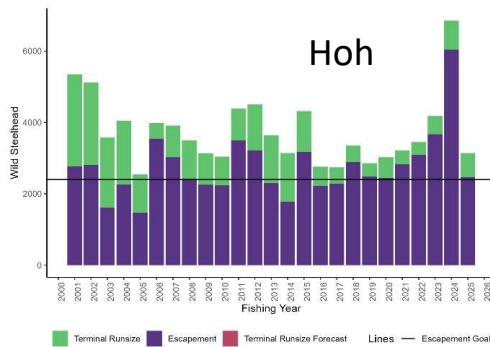


Olympic Peninsula

- ESA: NOT listed, 2022 listing petition under review, 2024 NOAA status review: moderate risk of extinction
- Significant reductions to fisheries since 2019, including gear restrictions, closures



From WDFW 2018. Steelhead at risk report: assessment of Washington's steelhead populations.



Figures from Erin Witkop, WDFW.

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Washington 2024 State of Salmon Report

Projected future status in 5 years



< 25% of recovery goal

> 25% < 50% of recovery goal

< 50% of recovery goal

< 100% of recovery goal

Middle Columbia River Steelhead

Declined since 2022 SOS



Puget Sound Steelhead*


Declined since 2022 SOS



Snake River Basin Steelhead




Lower Columbia River Steelhead



Upper Columbia River Steelhead

Improved abundance since 2022 SOS
NOAA 2022 BVAU high extinction risk



Declines in Washington Coast Steelhead, *not listed*

Declines in Olympic Peninsula Steelhead, *status under review by NOAA*

- *Lacks complete data.
- Data and analysis by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife stateofsalmon.wa.gov



Factors related to current status

Habitat

- Freshwater habitat: degradation is ubiquitous. Particularly acute in heavily developed and agricultural areas where land use changes are most pronounced. Olympic Peninsula DPS has highest proportion of conserved habitat.
- Ocean habitat: clear evidence of persistent multidecadal declines in marine survival and kelt survival

Hydropower

- Pronounced for interior Columbia (Columbia hydropower system), numerous high head dams in Puget Sound and Lower Columbia

Hatcheries

- Identified as a threat during listings. Have undergone major reforms to reduce impacts in Puget Sound and Lower Columbia, with smaller changes in Upper Columbia and Snake. Actively considering reforms in unlisted DPSs.

Harvest

- Sport retention: ended statewide in 2016. All listed populations require federal permits to operate sport fisheries, non-retention impacts are monitored and are held to very low exploitation rate.
- Non-tribal commercial: closed for many decades.
- Tribal: greatly curtailed in Puget Sound and Columbia Basin tributaries.



Questions?

State of Salmon in Watersheds, 2024

<https://stateofsalmon.wa.gov/>

Coastal Washington steelhead information

<https://wdfw.wa.gov/fishing/management/steelhead/coastal>

