Ever since we launched our first campaign, the Wild Salmon Project, in 1991, IRU has been committed to the recovery of Idaho’s endangered Snake River salmon and steelhead. IRU’s position has consistently relied on the best available science, which shows that the single-most effective recovery option for Idaho’s fish is breaching the four Lower Snake River dams. For decades IRU has challenged inadequate federal salmon plans that have spent billions of taxpayer dollars, ultimately becoming the most expensive failed species recovery efforts in our nation’s history.

Beyond the urgent biological situation, the economic and social landscape have transitioned furthering IRU’s case for dam breaching and river restoration. Changes in the Northwest energy landscape, along with viable alternatives to the services the dams provide by way of agricultural transportation and irrigation, have created a window of opportunity for change. The livelihoods of regional agricultural communities can be maintained while we recover salmon and revitalize the communities that rely on them.

- The power generated by the four Lower Snake River dams is surplus to Northwest energy requirements, and will continue to be in the future. The grid tally they provide can be replaced through increasing energy conservation and alternative green energy sources.

- The ability of grain growers to get their product to market at a reasonable price can be maintained by switching from a system of barges to an agricultural owned rail cooperative, utilizing the existing rail network.

- Citizens throughout the region monetarily value the recovery of salmon and steelhead, meaning the economic benefits of dam removal outweigh the costs.

- Breaching of the dams would result in a significant increase in abundance and a critical and substantial increase in smolt-to-adult survival rates. This puts more salmon and steelhead in Idaho rivers and on a strong pathway towards recovery.

Idaho’s declining salmon are in urgent need of action and their recovery will require a unified, regional effort that is unafraid to create bold management decisions. It will require utilizing the window of opportunity that changing economic, political and social realities have created. It envisions a future in which four dams are breached and a river’s immense natural amenities are restored.

2020 marks IRU’s 30th anniversary as an organization. This next year, IRU will further devote itself to restoring Idaho’s salmon and steelhead and urging state and federal policymakers to boldly act on behalf of Idaho’s wild fish. We are committed to seeing this work through and are grateful for your partnership on this journey—Let’s save Idaho’s native salmon and steelhead.
Imagine the Sawtooth Mountains benefit of bugs from rutting bulls in the fall, or the Henry's Fork without a rising forage fish to feed our summer run. Imagine the Sawtooth Mountains bereft of bugles from rutting bulls in the fall, or the Henry's Fork without a rising ... the country at the mention of Idaho (at least for those fortunate enough to know of it). As we head into our 30th year, Idaho Rivers United is again championing the effort to bring back three of Idaho’s most fundamental species: Chinook salmon, sockeye salmon, and steelhead. Never before have we witnessed more momentum toward that goal. From federal and state leaders engaging in actions to see these species restored, to witnessing numerous partner organizations joining our efforts to work this campaign. These are all highlights of the most important movement – Idahoans joining together to demand our fish back.

While much of our efforts have been spent working on salmon and steelhead, they are far from the only project successes for Idaho fisheries. We’ve safeguarded waters on the Snake and Columbia from pollution and temperature levels, that compete for the same freshwater and fish habitat. We’ve worked closely with grassroots partners on fighting dangerous mines at the headwaters of the South Fork of the Salmon River. Our conservation team has uncovered hundreds of miles of even the finest waters in the Nez Perce-Clearwater to protect their wild andSecretary of Commerce

**Message from the Executive Director**

Nic Nelson
Executive Director

Executive Director

**Hydro & Clean Water**

Idaho Rivers United (IRU) has been a steering committee member of the Hydropower Reform Coalition (HRC) for over 20 years. IRU and the HRC advocate for better water quality, recreational improvements, and improved conditions for fish and wildlife during the federal relicensing of hydro-power projects here in Idaho and across the nation.

2019 has been a challenging year for protecting water quality. In January, a federal court in Washington D.C. ruled in a California case that will have negative implications on water quality. While not a party to the litigation, IRU has been working with our HRC partners to engage states and tribes in an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. A decision on whether or not the court will hear the case is expected in the near future.

In August, the Environmental Protection Agency released a new proposed rule that would roll back protections for water quality as required by the Clean Water Act and as affirmed in numerous Supreme Court decisions over the last 25 years. Idaho Rivers United through the HRC submitted extensive comments in opposition to the draft rule and, unless the draft rule is withdrawn, litigation will likely result.

IRU and our conservation partners of Pacific Rivers sued the state of Oregon over its water quality certification of the Hells Canyon Hydro-power Complex in October. Oregon’s water quality certification fails to protect salmon and steelhead and does little to address extensive mercury contamination in the reservoirs and downstream through Hells Canyon. Separate legal actions were also filed by the Nez Perce and Burns Paiute Tribes.

IRU’s Clean Water Advocate of the Year: Mimi Hoagland

The work protecting and defending Idaho’s rivers is bigger than any one organization. For this reason IRU needs an extensive network of citizens, businesses, members, and partners to lend a hand.

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**Idaho Salmon Runs of 2019**

Idaho salmon runs of 2019 were marked yet again by low numbers. Snake River salmon and steelhead returned in meager numbers. Fishing seasons were cut short and bag limits were reduced across the Salmon and Clearwater rivers, with the poor condition of Idaho’s fish having increasingly gained attention in both the natural and political circles thanks to pressure from you, citizens that care and refuse to see your wild fish slide into extinction.

In 2019, IRU continued to amplify the voices of our passionate members and brought new conservationists into the fight through a blend of advocacy, outreach, and education. We monitored the year’s political events, ensuring that Idaho’s leaders knew of our members’ desire for the recovery of Idaho’s wild fish. IRU also fostered relationships throughout the region, maintaining coalitions that include an array of stakeholders who share the goal of salmon and steelhead recovery.

We will continue this work in 2020. In 2020, we will continue the work of 2019. We will continue this work in 2020. We will continue this work in 2020.