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 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 yet but meaningful action has yet to be undertaken. IRU and our allies have engaged in salmon recovery and dam removal but our partners who have kept wild salmon and steelhead at the forefront of regional issues.

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Looking ahead, members of Congress and the Administration have engaged in salmon recovery and dam removal yet but 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).
A Message from the Executive Director

“Tout stream is only a trout stream when it’s flowing between two banks, at its own pace, and in its own way.” I wish that I could take credit for that beautiful piece of writing, but all for the eloquent prose that the ecologist, “The River Why,” by David James Duncan features, it’s this sentiment that seems to reverberate each time I read it. It strikes the work that Idaho Rivers United works to perform to its corona – 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, opposition, 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 Wild and Scenic designations for our “wild” rivers. Our members have continued to be engaged and supportive of our advocacy, work for restored wild fish populations and permanently protected, healthy rivers in Idaho through your support and 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 contributions, it’s this work that Idaho Rivers United works to perform to its corona – at the foundation, it’s to keep our rivers free-flowing, clean, and ecologically sound.

Our vision is that Idaho’s remaining wild and free-flowing rivers stay that way, our developed rivers are restored, and our aquatic ecosystems thrive. We’ve been on a mission 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. We’ve also been working on helping streamline the federal permitting process – 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. Offentimes, 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 federal permitting process – 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. Offentimes, the emissions from a hydropower plant can rival or even surpass those of a coal-fired power plant.

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. We’ve also been working on helping streamline the federal permitting process – 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. Offentimes, the emissions from a hydropower plant can rival or even surpass those of a coal-fired power plant.

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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 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, it is as committed to protecting and restoring the rivers you love. Through your support and contributions, it’s this work that Idaho Rivers United works to perform to its corona – at the foundation, it’s to keep our rivers free-flowing, clean, and ecologically sound.

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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 halted 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 mining law, the Federal Mining Law of 1872. This law is antiquated, it’s this work that Idaho Rivers United works to perform to its corona – at the foundation, it’s to keep our rivers free-flowing, clean, and ecologically sound.

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 reflected upon the resident and endangered Giant Microtus species and water resources in the area. We are working on helping streamline the federal permitting process – 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. Offentimes, 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 federal permitting process – 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. Offentimes, the emissions from a hydropower plant can rival or even surpass those of a coal-fired power plant.

This year we have seen an increase in mining activity across the state that has kept our staff busy assessing the risks and impacts of mining and keeping the public informed. 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 halted 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.

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