

Quotes from Washington State Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups (RFEG) on Trump administration's abrupt cancellation of RFEG funding

Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Group

“NSEA utilizes USFWS funding - complimented by grants and donations -to provide funding for important core programs including our fourth-grade field science program and public habitat restoration events that engage thousands of community volunteers in salmon recovery efforts. The loss of federal funds combined with the instability of the AmeriCorps program, other federal grants, and Washington State's budget deficit puts all salmon recovery partners in a difficult position, reducing staff and programming, leaving large gaps in service for both our communities and the environment that we all depend on to thrive. In addition, funding cuts in this sector are contrary to the federal government's trustee obligation to protect and implement the treaties signed in the 1850's, threatening treaty rights for our indigenous communities. Collaborative co-management takes years to build trust with both rural and urban communities, partners, tribal communities, schools, and landowners and are very hard to rebuild once they are diminished. We are not able to keep up the pace with the urgency of salmon recovery without stable base funding that the USFWS has provided to the RFEG's since 1999.” *Annitra Peck, Executive Director*

Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group

“The Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group utilizes funding from the USFWS to support its education and monitoring programs. Our education programs are getting kids out of the classroom and learning first hand about salmon and what they can do to be stewards of salmon streams. Our monitoring programs train community volunteers to be citizen scientists collecting data about salmon use and habitat at restoration sites in order to ensure we understand project success. Without funding we cannot train volunteers to collect data and understand the impact these habitat restoration projects are having on salmon recovery. We utilize federal funds to leverage additional funds from private and public sources to deliver both of these valuable programs. The loss of federal funds combined with the instability of the AmeriCorps program, other federal grants, and Washington State's budget deficit puts us in an urgent need to fundraise for additional dollars in order to continue these valuable programs.” *Alison Studley, Executive Director*

Sound Salmon Solutions

“For over twenty-five years Sound Salmon Solutions (SSS) has relied on federal and state base funding to leverage additional funding for our key programs in salmon habitat restoration and education. Losing \$68,609 from USFW in addition to \$75,000 in ALEA and OPSI funds for Salmon in Schools programming is devastating to SSS and the many children and citizens benefiting from these programs. This loss of funding has required cutting our finance assistant position and other positions had to be cut from full-time to part-time. Energy and time that now must be spent on fundraising for survival decreases time spent on salmon recovery.” *Mary Brueggeman, Executive Director*

Mid Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group

“Mid Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group works with communities in the central Puget Sound region to restore salmon to local rivers and streams. The loss of federal funds will mean cuts to education programming like Salmon in Schools, impacting our ability to share the joy and wonder of salmon with kids in Auburn, Kent, and White Center. It will also make it incredibly difficult to develop the habitat restoration projects needed to recover salmon in our region. Without federal funding, we wouldn't have been able to restore an important stretch of Bear Creek in Redmond or restore a pocket estuary near Kingston. The amount we are losing is a small fraction of the federal budget, and we have been able to make it go a long way in doing good for salmon and our region.” *Antonia Jindrich and Tracy Banaszynski, Co-Executive Directors*

South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Group

"Federal funding from the USFWS is a critical component to the many restoration projects that the South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement Groups completes in collaboration with our partners. Without this federal investment momentum in our region will slow down and existing projects will be at risk. Completion of these projects boosts both economic and environmental benefits while improving aging infrastructure and supports fishing communities across the state." *Lance Winecka, Executive Director*

Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group

"Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group (HCSEG) utilizes USFWS funding to support our environmental education and monitoring activities. Our environmental education programs create awareness around healthy ecosystems and food webs. We get kids outside so they can learn about salmon and other wildlife in their natural habitats. Our monitoring programs help HCSEG determine the effectiveness of our habitat restoration projects. We train volunteers to collect data that enumerates salmon populations before and after restoration occurs. Without this USFWS funding, we will be unable to train volunteers to collect this valuable data that helps us and our partners understand how restoration dollars can be most effectively spent. In addition, our USFWS dollars are used to leverage thousands of dollars from other sources to aid in salmon recovery." *Mendy Harlow, Executive Director*

North Olympic Salmon Coalition

"Federal funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is a cornerstone of the North Olympic Salmon Coalition's ability to serve our communities and protect salmon habitat. These funds provide critical base support for our education and outreach programs, and the development of restoration projects. These functions are foundational to our mission but difficult to fund through project-specific grants alone. Without this reliable federal investment, we would be unable to engage local students and volunteers in hands-on environmental learning, build community partnerships, or advance early-stage restoration planning that leads to shovel-ready, science-based salmon recovery projects. Continued support from USFWS ensures that we can not only respond to current environmental challenges but also build the long-term community capacity and resilience needed to protect salmon and their habitat for generations to come." *Sarah Doyle, Executive Director*

Pacific Coast Salmon Coalition

"The Pacific Coast Salmon Coalition has depended on funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to support essential salmon habitat restoration and vital community programs, including a summer school initiative for middle school students, processing hatchery salmon for donation to our local food bank, nutrient enhancement projects, and tree-planting efforts. The elimination of this funding will have significant consequences for our staff, local businesses, and contractors, while also jeopardizing the recovery of endangered salmon populations." *Chad Wilkins, Executive Director*

Chehalis Basin Fisheries Task Force

"Federal funding is essential for maintaining our region's collaborative efforts to protect and restore salmon habitat. Through our work, we are not only preserving a keystone species, but we are also strengthening local economies, supporting community partnerships, and providing education. Additionally, we are ensuring that future generations can experience the cultural and ecological richness of the Chehalis Basin, making it a place where people, salmon, and traditions thrive together." *Maria Cerdana, Administrative Director*

Willapa Bay Fisheries Enhancement Group

"Willapa Bay Fisheries Enhancement Group uses funding from USFWS to support a variety of smaller yet critical projects including riparian restoration for small landowners, carcass distribution/nutrient enhancement for stream health, monitoring of past restoration projects, and several remote site incubators used to reintroduce salmon into restored habitat." *David Lewis, Managing Director*

Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group

"For 27 years, the Lower Columbia Fish Enhancement Group has relied on steady federal funding to support salmon recovery efforts in Southwest Washington. Losing this support puts local jobs, habitat restoration, and our ability to respond to community needs at serious risk." *Morgan Morris, Executive Director*

Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group

"For more than 25 years, federal funding has helped our organization to restore habitat for salmon and steelhead in Central Washington. We currently have significant grant funding for restoration work under contract, but the loss of the federal support threatens our ability to manage the grants, keep the organization running, and implement the contracted work. On-going federal funding is a small part of our organizational budget, but it is the foundation that supports and enables the rest of our work." *Margaret Neuman, Executive Director*

Tri-State Steelheaders

"Tri-State Steelheaders uses federal funds to provide a hands-on STEM education program where students raise salmon in classroom aquariums. The Salmon in School program serves over 1,500 students at 28 sites in southeast Washington. The loss of USFWS funds means we must eliminate education staff that provide Salmon in School. The loss of staff means the elimination of Salmon in School sites, primarily impacting rural schools like Starbuck, Prescott, Dayton, Waitsburg, Dixie, and Pomeroy." *Brian Burns, Executive Director*

Cascade Fisheries

"Cascade Fisheries utilizes \$68,000 from the USFWS to leverage an additional four to six million dollars annually. Most of our annual budget goes to Washington-based engineering firms and construction contractors. In addition to addressing needs of our Federally-listed endangered salmon and steelhead, taxes and profits from these sub-contracts filter into local businesses and families." *Jason Lundgren, Executive Director*

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