



# MIDDLE METHOW NEWS

Working Together to Restore Fish Habitat in the Methow River

Issue 5 Summer 2012

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Newsletter prepared by Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation

For previous newsletters, project designs, and general information on the M2 Reach 1 Habitat Project, visit [www.methowsalmon.org/m2](http://www.methowsalmon.org/m2)



Whitefish Island Project Area



WDFW Floodplain Project Area

## M2 Construction Ahead: Whitefish Island & WDFW Floodplain Projects

Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation, in partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration, and the Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board, is constructing two habitat projects along the Methow River this summer.

### Why we're doing the projects

Spring Chinook salmon and steelhead native to the Methow watershed are listed under the Endangered Species Act. These ocean-going fish spend their first year in our local rivers and streams. The quality of the available habitat determines how well the fish grow, gain strength, and become more fit for their journey to the Pacific.

The M2 projects will create better habitat for these young fish to use while they grow bigger and stronger during this critical first year. The goal is that more juvenile salmon and steelhead will survive the first year and be larger and stronger for the long journey to the ocean. In other words, better juvenile habitat should increase the numbers of surviving fish that will later return as adults to spawn in the streams where they were born.

### Where and when we're going to construct

Whitefish Island (off Witte Road): construction will begin in mid-August and last through late October. Work will take place in the side channel, on the island, and in the floodplain on the west side of the river.

WDFW Floodplain (off Old Twisp Highway and Evans/Lewisia Road): construction will take place

from mid-August to mid-September. Construction efforts will take place on the east bank of the river below the MVID east fish screen area and in the main channel in the area of the old diversion dam. Materials staging for both projects will take place in the field off Old Twisp Highway.

### Who to contact with questions

Please contact Michael Notaro at 509-429-2939 with any questions regarding either project. Also, we will be scheduling tours of the project sites in the upcoming weeks, so let Michael know you are interested in joining one of these group site visits.



### Reach 1 Habitat Project Contact

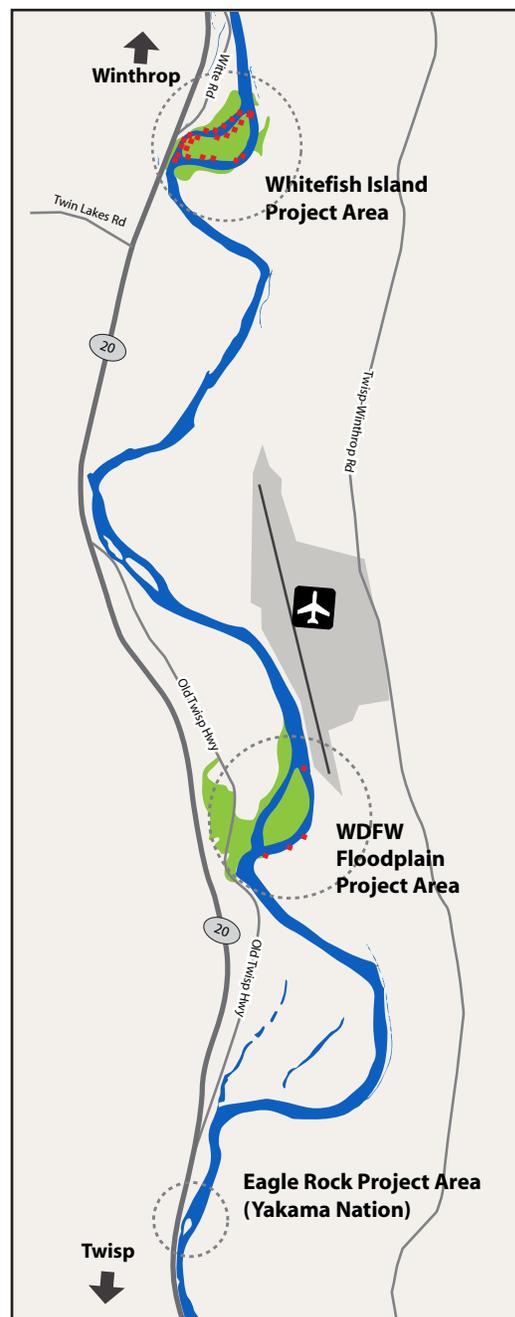
**Michael Notaro**

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### Reach 2 Habitat Project Contact

**Hans Smith**

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Habitat Restoration Project  
(509) 996-5005



## Success = More Fish

With habitat improvements, fisheries management, and dam passage improvements, the restoration community is making progress to improve the numbers of returning steelhead, and spring Chinook are no longer in decline. Nevertheless, without ongoing efforts to improve habitat, these trends are unlikely to continue, because the current numbers of returning fish will not be sustainable over time. We believe that creating better habitat for young fish will enable us to make progress on increasing their total numbers and that projects like the M2 Habitat projects will help achieve this goal.

The USGS is conducting research as part of an overall effort to learn from our projects and to improve our results. The study, which began in 2008, will monitor fish use in the river for several years before and after the projects are complete. This should help us understand the effects we are having and allow us to continue to improve our efforts going forward.

## Committed to Long-Term Success

With our partners, Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation is committed to long-term involvement in salmon habitat restoration in the Methow Valley. As part of this commitment, we have developed a comprehensive monitoring program for our restoration projects. At the M2 project sites, our monitoring program will have three primary components:

- Plant survival—this includes maintaining the plantings with temporary fencing, weeding, and irrigation, and replanting as needed.
- Structure function—this includes checking the structures before and after high water events and over time to determine if they are functioning as designed.
- Project effectiveness—this involves a long-term study by the USGS to see how fish respond to the habitat improvements.

Direct monitoring efforts will continue for three to five years after construction. For the longer-term, MSRF will maintain a strong local presence, continue periodic project site visits, and be available to help respond to concerns with completed projects. Please contact MSRF Board President Chris Johnson, (509) 429-1232, if you have any questions regarding our long-term commitment to the Methow Valley.



## YN M2 Reach 2 Update:



This August the Yakama Nation Habitat Project is proceeding with the M2 Habitat Project in Reach 2 by implementing the Eagle Rocks Large Wood Enhancement Project, which will take place along the western shore of the Methow River just north of the River Bend RV Park. The wood has already been stockpiled for this project and has been visible along Highway 20 for over the past month. This project consists of placing four wood structures along the right bank of the river within an existing small side channel for the benefit of providing more complex cover habitat for juvenile salmon and steelhead in some existing small pools. The wood will enhance the pool conditions by providing shade and escape cover for the fish, and encouraging additional scour to maintain the pool depths. The structures are designed with river user safety in mind by being sighted in an area not commonly used by recreational floaters and by constructed to deflect and shed floating objects. The project is anticipated to take about five or six working days to complete.

Additional large wood enhancement projects are planned for next summer within Reach 2, as well as some larger scale side channel and floodplain restoration projects. The Yakama Nation plans to conduct work in Reach 2 of the Middle Methow Reach through 2018.

Please contact Hans Smith at (509) 996-5005 with questions on Yakama Nation's M2 projects.

## Know Before You Go

- ◆ Be aware of construction areas along the river. Visit [www.methowsalmon.org/m2](http://www.methowsalmon.org/m2) for more information and maps.
- ◆ River flows can vary widely from year to year, so visit the USGS web site for local stream flow information before you float: [http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/current/?type=methow&group\\_key=basin\\_cd](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/wa/nwis/current/?type=methow&group_key=basin_cd)
- ◆ Summer storms can come up quickly and turn a hot day on the water into a cold, wet float, so check the local weather forecast before you set out: <http://www.weather.gov/>



## SUMMER 2012 FISH HABITAT CONSTRUCTION ZONE

### Winthrop Barn to Twisp Confluence Park

While on the Methow River this summer, you may notice construction activities along the banks and in the river. These projects are designed to improve habitat conditions and water quality.



## Respect the River – Float Safely

- Wear a life jacket
- Wear footwear in case you have to get out and walk
- Avoid intoxication
- Stay hydrated
- Go with a group and stay together
- Stay warm—the river is cold even in the late summer
- Pack your trash out—clean water is a valuable resource that we all must work to protect

## Fish Grow on Trees

Healthy riparian forests help create the complex habitat fish need to thrive. Trees and shrubs growing along the river provide cooling shade, cover, and nutrients that support young growing fish. Planting native vegetation along the river and floodplains is an important part of fish restoration, and using locally sourced seeds and plants leads to much higher success rates.

At the M2 Whitefish Island and WDFW Floodplain projects, restoration efforts will include planting over 7500 potted plants and cuttings of native trees, shrubs, and grasses. Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation (MSRF) and Methow Natives plant nursery owner Rob Crandall have been working to develop a large source of locally grown plants to meet this anticipated need.

Specializing in growing, restoring, and protecting native vegetation in the Methow Valley since 1999, Rob has been working with MSRF since 2004 to restore native habitat along creeks and rivers to benefit our local fish and wildlife.



Rob Crandall specializes in restoring native riparian vegetation

At the M2 sites, Rob and his crew will play a critical role in creating the complex habitat needed to support juvenile salmon and steelhead. As the logjams are constructed along the riverbanks, locally sourced live cottonwood and willow poles will be incorporated into the structures to jumpstart the natural regeneration of the riparian forest.

After construction, the project sites will be replanted with locally grown native shrubs, grasses, and trees. Methow Natives will put up temporary deer fences to protect the new plants and maintain them by weeding, irrigating, and replanting as needed. Restoration planting projects require three to five years of maintenance to ensure survival, and Rob and his crew will be there for the duration.

In addition to helping restore native habitats, Rob is a passionate advocate for watershed education. For the last 15 years, Rob has worked with local schoolchildren in the Watershed Watchers program. Through this effort, 300-400 students now visit the MSRF Twisp Ponds restoration site every year to explore and learn about native plants, fish, wildlife, and healthy watersheds. Currently, Rob is involved with the Methow Interpretive Center at TwispWorks, where he is working on establishing a native plants exhibition garden.



Juvenile Spring Chinook Salmon

Juvenile spring Chinook from last year's spawning emerged from their gravel nests in March. These tiny fish have been seeking places to hide from predators while feeding and growing. These young salmon will spend a year in the rivers where they hatched before beginning their ocean journey next spring.

**Steelhead:** Adults spawned in Methow Valley rivers and creeks back in late March through May. Newly hatched steelhead juveniles are now emerging from the gravel. These little fish are very vulnerable to predators, so they look for cover in off-channel areas, along channel margins, and under logjams and downed trees in the water.

**Bull trout:** These fish prefer cold water. The youngest bull trout are usually found in the upper reaches of rivers and creeks, near where they hatched. Adults and older juveniles ("teenagers") are sometimes found in the middle Methow in colder areas near springs and in deep pools. These fish are active at night, and are important native predators that help maintain balance in the river system. Bull trout in the Methow can grow to around 28-inches, and grow larger by feeding on other fish, like Whitefish, sculpin, minnows, and yes, young steelhead and Chinook.

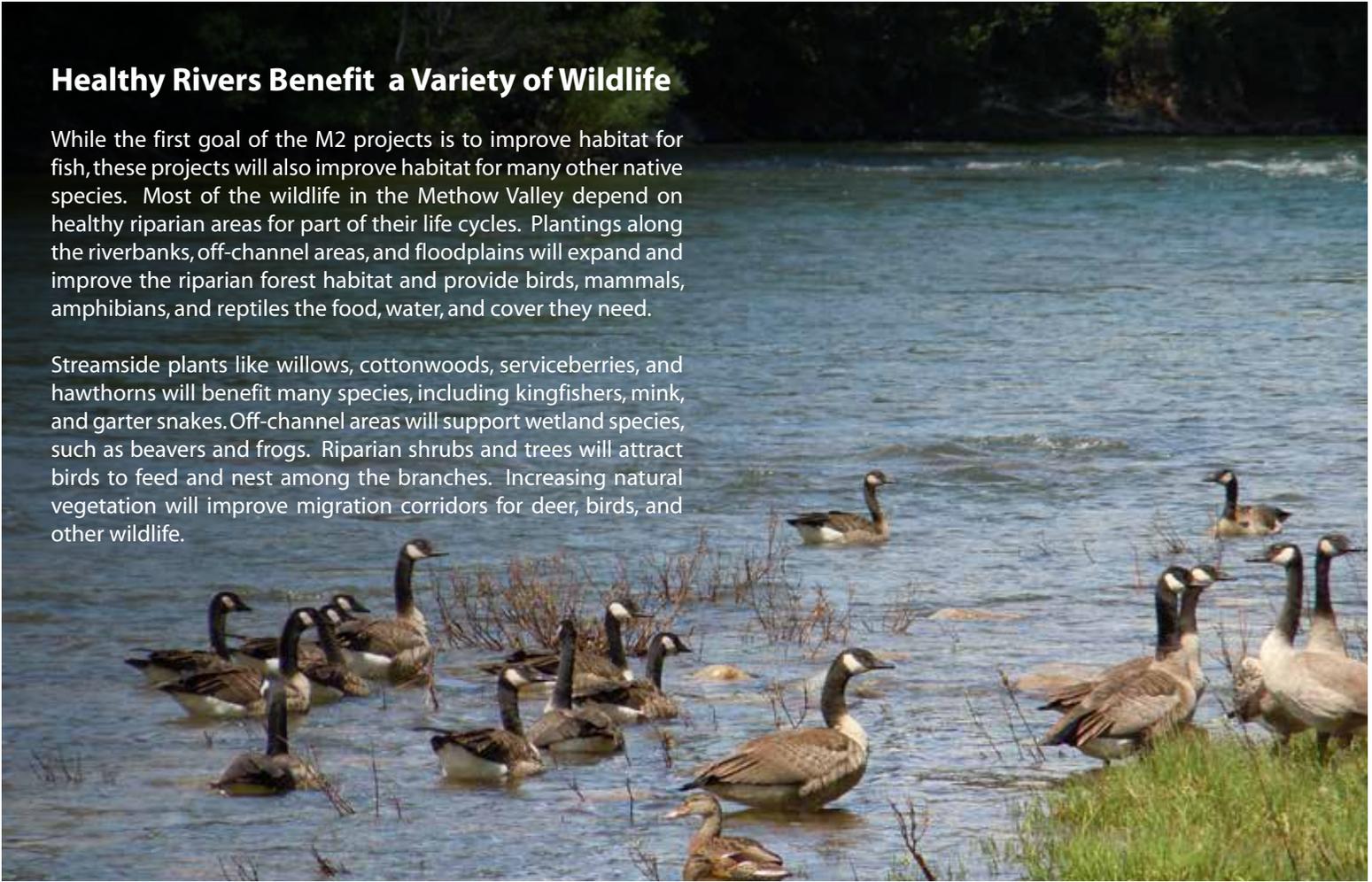
## Fish Update:

**Spring Chinook:** Adults returning from the ocean arrived in the Methow in June. They hold in deep pools in the lower river before making their way upstream to their spawning areas – often the same place they were born. Spring Chinook begin spawning in mid-August, mostly in the Twisp and Chewuch Rivers and in the upper Methow River upstream of Winthrop. A few also spawn in the upper M2, from the WDFW Floodplain area to Winthrop.

## Healthy Rivers Benefit a Variety of Wildlife

While the first goal of the M2 projects is to improve habitat for fish, these projects will also improve habitat for many other native species. Most of the wildlife in the Methow Valley depend on healthy riparian areas for part of their life cycles. Plantings along the riverbanks, off-channel areas, and floodplains will expand and improve the riparian forest habitat and provide birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles the food, water, and cover they need.

Streamside plants like willows, cottonwoods, serviceberries, and hawthorns will benefit many species, including kingfishers, mink, and garter snakes. Off-channel areas will support wetland species, such as beavers and frogs. Riparian shrubs and trees will attract birds to feed and nest among the branches. Increasing natural vegetation will improve migration corridors for deer, birds, and other wildlife.



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