

# Rogue Flyfishers Conservation Strategy 2025-2026



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*By keeping the fish in the water for the picture and handling the fish gently, this fisherman is demonstrating best practices for being a conservation-minded angler.*

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## 1.0 Organizational Mission

The purpose of the Rogue Flyfishers (RFF), as stated in the club bylaws, is *“to promote the conservation, protection, and enhancement of our fish and wildlife resources and habitats; to promote conservation of recreational resources; and to facilitate and improve the knowledge of fly fishing.”* Additionally, the following statement is found on the opening page of our club’s website. *“Organized in 1971, the Rogue Flyfishers seek to promote fellowship among individuals and groups to further interest in the sport, to improve angling techniques, and to educate members and the public in ways to preserve and improve the natural resources, environment, and conditions for fishing in the Rogue Valley.”*

## 2.0 Conservation Goals

Based upon the above, the conservation aspects of the club’s purpose can be rewritten as follows:

1. Protect and enhance our fisheries
2. RFF will conserve recreational resources associated with the places we fish.
3. RFF will facilitate and improve knowledge of fly fishing.
4. RFF will educate members and the public in ways to preserve and improve the natural resources and environment and conditions of our fisheries.

The terms “our fisheries” and “places we fish” refers primarily to the Rogue Basin but also to the fisheries within a day trip of our home. This geographic area extends as far south as the California-Oregon border, to the Umpqua River in the north, to Klamath Lake and the associated rivers to the east, and to the coastal rivers to the west.

The term “wildlife” may cause confusion because it includes a broad range of species, from bears to birds to snakes. Because the RFF is focused on fly flyfishing, this statement was modified to focus only on fish, their food, and habitat.

“Recreational resources” refers to the rivers, lakes, reservoirs, connected wetlands, access trails, and parks. The term “conserve” means to protect and manage these resources. Thus, this statement differs from the first statement in that it expands our missions from just the fish habitat to human-built components of the environment associated with the fisheries.

Statements 3 and 4 are sufficient on their own, with no further explanation needed. Later, in this plan, more specifics will be added, including the “Where? When? and “How?”.

## 3.0 Environmental Scan

One of the most important tools in the strategic planning process is the analysis of an organization’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT). The evaluation is done for external factors such as the condition of the resource and groups working to address the issues and for internal factors to the RFF.

### 3.1 External Analysis

**Strengths:** The Rogue River is significant because of its history, salmon and steelhead fishing, wildlife, whitewater boating, and overall value as a natural resource. The river also represents a significant source of economic activity from tourism, recreational boating and fishing, hiking, and camping.

The number of agencies and conservation groups in the region is also a strength. The following government agencies have missions that overlap with the RFF mission. For example, the mission of the **Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW)** is to protect and enhance Oregon's fish and wildlife and their habitats for use and enjoyment by present and future generations. **DEQ's** mission is to be a leader in restoring, maintaining, and enhancing the quality of Oregon's air, land, and water. **Jackson County Parks and Recreation Department** operates eighteen county parks and provides opportunities for enjoyment of many recreational activities. **The Jackson County Roads Department** has a program to provide citizens who are concerned with Jackson County's environment an opportunity to control litter and improve the appearance of the county road system through their Adopt-a-Road program. The Natural Resources Department of the **Rogue Valley Council of Governments** is involved in many activities directed at improving the health and vitality of our watersheds within the Rogue Basin. Activities include water quality monitoring, regional TMDL implementation and coordination, regional water quality planning, endangered species conservation, laboratory analysis of water quality samples, watershed education, and greenway planning and construction.

There are several conservation organizations in the Rogue Basin that have overlapping missions with the RFFs. Both the **Rogue River Watershed Council** and **Water Watch of Oregon** are active in removing barriers to fish passage, restoring habitat, and advocating for protections for water quantity and quality. **Rogue Riverkeeper** is an advocacy organization that works to protect and restore clean water, native fish, and healthy communities in the Rogue River Basin. Guided by the best available science, the **Native Fish Society** advocates for the recovery and protection of wild, native fish and promotes the stewardship of the habitats that sustain them. Although not yet well established in the Rogue Basin, Trout Unlimited has opened an office in Ashland. The mission of **Trout Unlimited** is to bring together diverse interests to care for and recover rivers and streams so our children can experience the joy of wild and native trout and salmon. **The Upper Rogue Guardians** are an advocacy group of homeowners and other citizens interested in protecting the health and integrity of the Upper Rogue River. The **Middle Rogue Steelheaders** are a group of anglers with a passion for fishing and dedication to conserving, protecting, and restoring cold-water fisheries and their watersheds in southwest Oregon.

The list of organizations is not meant to be comprehensive as there are other organizations whose interests are congruent to those of RFF but are not necessarily limited to fish (e.g., bird watchers, native plant associations, etc.). We don't want to exclude any group that possibly shares any sort of similar interest.

**Weaknesses:** There are limits as to what can be done by any organization to improve the conditions of the river. The sciences aren't clear how much the fish population of the Rogue River will recover if all the recommendations to improve conditions are implemented. Each

organization also has its financial and human-capital limits, which may make reaching full implementation not achievable in the time needed.

**Opportunities:** There are frequent opportunities announced by our partners each year. These include opportunities to work with ODFW, which needs volunteers to help toss salmon carcasses into river tributaries and conduct fish counts in holding pens. There may also be opportunities to work with ODFW during their kids' free fishing events.

Many of the conservation groups identified above need help advocating for the protection of the river and its resources. Advocacy is typically in the form of attending meetings, submitting written comments, and providing oral testimony.

Some of the conservation groups also announce volunteer opportunities to participate in revegetation projects or to attend educational tours.

**Threats:** According to the Rogue-South Coast Multi-Species Conservation and Management Plan [\[1\]](#), summer steelhead and coho salmon were below the desired status in the Upper Rogue. Winter steelhead was not reported in the original plan because metrics had not been developed. As of 2024, the situation hadn't changed significantly, but metrics for Winter Steelhead showed that site occupancy for Winter Steelhead was greater than the desired status, but the Coastal Stratum Juvenile Abundance Index and Huntley Wild Half-Pounder Counts were below the desired status. The population of coast cutthroat trout is at or greater than the desired status.

The primary threats to the upper Rogue River are habitat access, water quality, and water quantity. Habitat access includes upstream passage and downstream passage/screening. Temperature and toxic pollutants are the primary water quality issues. Low flows, particularly during summer, are the primary water quantity issue. To a lesser extent, sedimentation and peripheral connections (e.g., connections to wetlands, side channels, and floodplains) were also identified as limiting factors keeping current conditions from reaching desired conditions.

Water quality has been degraded in some of our local rivers and lakes. According to the Oregon Department of Environment Quality (DEQ), bacteria, temperature, sedimentation, pH, and dissolved oxygen are impaired in the Rogue Basin. The effluent from the Medford Regional Water Reclamation Facility is one source of excess nutrients impairing the water quality and negatively affecting biota. In addition to the Rogue River, some of the lakes in the region are also threatened by harmful algal blooms and invasive species.

Jet boats, especially commercial jet boats are a threat to Rogue River, particularly in the narrow portions of the upper Rogue River due to large waves they generate which have the potential to harm the river bottom, redds, and enhance shore erosion. They are also a safety concern for on-coming boat traffic in and around blind spots.

Uncharacteristically intense and severe wildfires pose a significant threat to our fisheries. Some of the negative impacts of these fires include fish kills, increased water temperature due to the loss of shading vegetation, and soil erosion caused by heavy rains following wildfires.

## 3.2 Internal Analysis

**Strengths:** Rogue Flyfishers (RFF) was established in 1971. Currently, RFF has approximately 150 members. Approximately one third of the members attend the monthly dinner meetings. RFF has a reputation as dedicated fly fishermen who support conservation efforts and collaborate well with partners. The club members have substantial knowledge and experience with different fly-fishing techniques and locations.

**Weaknesses:** Only a few club members (i.e., less than 10) attend conservation events such as tree plantings, trash clean-ups, or fish surveys. Currently, RFF is comprised of an older demographic, which is not as physically active as in prior years, which limits the capability of performing physically demanding work associated with restoration projects. RFF has a relatively small budget (e.g., \$2000 - \$8000) to dedicate to conservation efforts each year, which is highly dependent on the annual auction.

**Opportunities:** There are several organizations in southwestern Oregon, such as Rogue River Watershed Council and Water Watch of Oregon, which are actively involved with fisheries conservation. Historically, RFF has provided funds to pay for staff time for these organizations to write requests for much larger grants that fund the actual work on the ground, such as large revegetation projects or dam removal.

**Threats:** In addition to the threats to fisheries previously identified, the RFF organization may be at risk if the fisheries collapse or if the membership of the club dwindles to less than a critical mass.

## 4.0 Conservation Objectives

1. Each year, the RFF will provide financial or other types of support to external partners which restore and protect the fisheries of the Rogue Basin.
2. Each year, the RFF will work with external agencies to help maintain the recreational resources associated with the fisheries of the Rogue Basin.
3. Each year, RFF will facilitate several club meetings and offer at least one event to the public to improve their knowledge of fly fishing.
4. Each year, the RFF will produce and distribute materials, give presentations, or participate in existing efforts with external partners to educate members and the public in ways to preserve and improve the natural resources and environment and conditions for fishing in the Rogue Valley.

## 5.0 Strategic Actions

The following actions will be implemented during the plan period (2025-2026).

### 5.1 Protect and enhance the Rogue Basin fisheries.

Action 1: Allocate a portion of the funds we raise each year towards conservation organizations which will improve fish habitat such as, but not limited to, the Rogue River Watershed Council and Water Watch of Oregon. In recent years, this amount has ranged from \$2000 to \$8000 per year.

Action 2: RFF will continue to advocate for the protection of our fisheries. We are most effective in protecting our fisheries when we collaborate with external partners. We will continue to collaborate with the Rogue Riverkeepers and the Upper Rogue Guardians, as well as other organizations. Much of this work includes reviewing proposed actions or rules, attending meetings and providing comments to the government agency proposing the action.

Action 3: Actively participate in “on the ground” conservation efforts such as habitat improvement, or fish surveys. Each year, we would like at least six RFF members to volunteer to work with federal, state, or local governments, tribes, or non-profit groups to perform these activities.

Action 4. Facilitate a meeting with local conservation groups to discuss each group’s current goals, activities, and learnings; identify gaps, and seek solutions to fill gaps.

## **5.2 Conserve the recreation resources associated with the Rogue Basin fisheries.**

Action 1: At least once each year, four to eight RFF members will volunteer to conduct litter clean-up along Takelma Road from Highway 62 to Lost Creek Lake dam, including Casey and McGregor County Parks and the Holy Water.

Action 2: RFF members demonstrate being good stewards of our recreational resources by picking up trash when we go out fishing.

Action 3. RFF members survey signs on the Upper Rogue River, including Holy Water, to identify if signs need to be replaced or needed. If there’s a need, RFF will approach responsible agency about sign replacement. RFF will help replace signs as able, including providing the funding and labor to install.

## **5.3 Facilitate and improve knowledge of flyfishing.**

Action 1: Continue the presentation at RFF monthly dinner meetings, which pertain to increasing the knowledge of fly fishing.

Action 2: Continue to support Casting for Recovery, which teaches women dealing breast cancer how to fly fish.

Action 3. Continue to support Project Healing Waters, which teaches Veterans aspects of fly fishing and fly tying through the Veterans Administration.

Action 4: RFF will support the Mayfly Project, which teaches children in foster care how to fly fish. Our support may be in the form of financially sponsoring a child in the program, volunteering to be a mentor, or providing flies or other fishing equipment to the organization.

Action 5: Talk with ODFW about jointly hosting a local event during Kids Free Fishing Day, in which RFF provides fly-fishing equipment and instructors to teach kids how to fly fish. Additionally, talk to ODFW about participating in the Eggs to Fry program.

Action 6: Talk with a retail fishing store or the Jackson County Parks and Recreation department about RFF members giving a presentation or class on fly fishing.

#### **5.4 Educate members and the public in ways to preserve and improve the natural resources, environment, and conditions for fishing in the Rogue Basin.**

Action 1: Publish two to four articles a year in the RFF newsletter on current science associated with fisheries conservation and management, as it pertains to our fisheries.

Action 2: Talk with The World Salmon Council about RFF members volunteering to help with a Salmon Watch event in the Upper Rogue River next fall.

Action 3. RFF members will demonstrate “best practices” in catch and release fishing. Currently, best practices include minimizing fighting and handling time, use of proper hooks and gear, wetting hands before handling fish, minimizing air exposure, handling fish gently, removing hooks gently, and reviving fish before releasing.