

# Long-term study shows thriving cutthroat trout in coast range

**CORVALLIS** — A decade-long study of cutthroat trout in the Oregon Coast Range has found that logging practices conducted in accord with the Oregon Forest Practices Act had no adverse impacts on coastal cutthroat trout and coho salmon populations or movements.

In studies of logging practices prior to passage of the act in 1971, changes to fish habitat were documented from the use of stream channels as transportation corridors for logs and from other changes to riparian areas adjacent to streams. One of the landmark studies of such practices occurred in the Alsea River watershed in the late 1960s.

Starting in 2006, a team of researchers from Oregon State University, the U.S. Geological Survey, Colorado State University and the forest products industry returned to the Alsea basin to study the impacts of modern logging practices conducted in compliance with the act.

They assessed the numbers of cutthroat trout, aged one year old and older, annually through 2014 in the watersheds of Needle Branch and Flynn creeks.

The researchers also documented forest cover, stream habitat conditions and stream temperature and discharge.

Logging occurred in Needle Branch in 2009, but Flynn Creek was left unharvested, just as it had been in the 1960s.

The results were published March 1 in a professional journal, *Forest Ecology and Management*.

"In the 1960s, the stream channel in Needle Branch got hammered, and the cutthroat took it in the shorts," said Doug Bateman, the lead author of the paper, now a retired researcher in the College of Forestry.

In the latest study, the biomass of cutthroat trout in Needle Branch increased after the tree harvest relative to the trout in Flynn. In the headwaters area of Needle Branch, nearly all of

the trees were cut with the exception of the required buffer strip along the fish-bearing portion of the stream.

By monitoring the movements of fish up and downstream, the researchers were able to determine that increases in Needle Branch were related to local changes rather than to influxes of fish from other areas.

"It's rare to be able to say that," said Bateman. "In other studies, it is often unknown whether changes in population size are associated with fish movement, but here we show that the fish responded to conditions in the harvested portion of the channel. We weren't set up to study the causes of the increase, so we can't really say for sure."

"It's possible that increases in sunlight or increased export of invertebrates from upstream areas contributed to the increased fish biomass, but it could also be related to any number of other factors, such as stream temperatures, changes in predators or

disease." The researchers also recorded changes in numbers of juvenile coho salmon, which were found generally downstream from harvested areas where increases in cutthroat trout were most apparent.

No changes were observed in numbers of salmon over the course of the study, possibly due to the fact that these fish were located downstream from the logged area.

The salmon numbers are also complicated, said Bateman, by the species' migratory behavior, which exposes the fish to a variety of factors such as sport and commercial harvest and to conditions in the ocean and estuaries that most cutthroat trout do not experience.

"We can confidently say that, in this watershed, cutthroat trout were not negatively affected by logging activities over the course of the study," said Bateman. "We're cautious about generalizing these results to other water-

sheds since conditions can vary so much. Still, these fish are probably well adapted to changes in the streams, and forests provide some of the best remaining habitat for them.

"When you move downstream into areas adjacent to farm fields and urban areas, the changes to rivers and streams can pose significant challenges. It's important to look at the watershed as a whole."

Funding for the study came from public and private organizations including: the College of Forestry and Watershed Research Cooperative at Oregon State University; the U.S. Geological Survey; Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board; USDA Forest Service; the federal Bureau of Land Management; the National Council for Air and Stream Improvement; the Oregon Forest and Industries Council; Plum Creek Timber; and Hancock Forest Management.

## Little from 1B

stadium was live; but any ball hit into or over the bleachers was a home run.

Once, we lost a game because an umpire included the front of the announcers' booth as part of the face, even though it was 50 feet in the air; he denied a home run off the roof front and we lost by one run.

In left field, we used the left goalpost pole as a foul pole. It was at least one foot in fair territory but we determined it a fair way to judge balls hit over the fence in that direction.

There was a chalk line drawn parallel to the third base foul line for out-of-play.

Balls caught on the field side were outs; but if a player caught the ball and ran over the line, runners were awarded an

extra base. These ground rules were in effect until a portable plywood fence was built in the early 1990s.

In 1978, my first season as head coach, I — with help from many others — made some changes to the area behind the back stop because the blackberry bushes and other vegetation ate up baseballs, which made finding foul balls difficult.

I had many helpers clearing the brush. We also gradually added a portable backstop to be used during batting practice.

I also had a protective screen built for pitchers and first base during batting practice. Eventually, we built a batting cage close to the fence on the third base side and, thanks to the Woosley family, installed an electric cord from the scoreboard to the back of the

dugouts. This allowed volunteers to sell coffee and hot dogs to raise money for baseball.

We were also able to change the football scoreboard into a baseball scoreboard.

To illustrate the football hold on the old Hans Peterson field, you only need to know that in over 20 years of football games on that field, the coaches not once had to prepare the field for a game. From seventh grade

through varsity, the football field was always ready for the game; by contrast, I was chalking lines and batters boxes for Saturday baseball games.

We played some exciting baseball games at the old field. In future columns I will choose some of our best games and valuable players that helped Siuslaw become Far West League contenders.

## Fishing from 1B

• It's not too late to get your spring Chinook. In fact, several fisheries are just heating up. Check out the Columbia above Bonneville Dam and the lower Rogue. Or, be the first to report catching a springer in the Nestucca or Tillamook bays.

• It's getting warm enough for warmwater fish. There's largemouth bass in Lost River, crappie in Gerber and Campbell reservoirs, and the elusive striped bass in the Smith River.

• Anglers have reported catching rockfish and lingcod inside the Umpqua jetty and in Coos Bay near the north jetty and other submerged rock structures.

Float fishing jigs, beads, or bait, drift fishing, nymphing, and swinging flies or spinners are all good techniques.

Three Rivers is getting on the low side but there are fish throughout the system.

**SALMON RIVER: Steelhead**  
Wild winter steelhead can be retained on the Salmon River. Daily and annual bag limit on wild winter steelhead are 1 per day and 3 per year. Casting spinners, drifting bait or using a bobber and jig can be effective.

Winter steelhead has picked up throughout the river.

**SALMONBERRY RIVER: Steelhead**

The Salmonberry is getting low and clear but there should be some big wild steelhead showing up this time of year, but be prepared to catch and release.

Check with the Port of Tillamook Bay for access restrictions.

**SILETZ RIVER: Steelhead**  
Winter steelhead is continuing to pick up throughout the river. A mix of wild and hatchery fish are being caught. Rain over the weekend has raised the river level and got fish moving again.

Casting spinners, drifting bait or using a bobber and jig can be effective.

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