



News Release

Coastal Conservation Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ABANDONED FISHING GEAR THREATENS SALMON AND STEELHEAD IN LOCAL RIVER

CCA WASHINGTON ALERTS WDFW TO NOOKSACK RIVER DERELICT FISHING NETS

Derelict fishing gear is a well documented problem in Puget Sound, but it is also a serious problem and concern in our fresh water river systems as well.

In November 2009 and again in February 2010, members of the North Sound chapter of Coastal Conservation Association Washington and other concerned recreational anglers in Whatcom County spent countless hours and resources documenting via GPS coordinates and photographs over 62 derelict gill nets in the Nooksack River.

Many of these nets appear to be still fishing in a river system that is home to imperiled wild and native runs of salmon, steelhead and bull trout. Bryan Irwin, Executive Director of Coastal Conservation Association in the Pacific Northwest states "this is an urgent situation and a direct impediment to the recovery of wild stocks of salmon and steelhead." He goes on to say that "they also pose a significant threat to other aquatic mammals and birds in the area."

The Bellingham Herald reported on March 13th that the Northwest Straits Commission, who has been working since 2002 to recover abandoned fishing gear and crab pots in marine waters in Puget Sound, recovered over 100,000 pounds of derelict fishing gear in the marine waters of Whatcom County. An estimated 136,879 marine mammals, birds, fish and invertebrates have been found in the abandoned gear so far. Ginny Broadhurst, Executive Director of the Northwest Straits Commission, commented that "the nets continue to fish indiscriminately and catch a whole variety of marine life."

CCA Washington has presented the data, coordinates and pictures to Phil Anderson, Director of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife in hopes that the department will disseminate the information to the appropriate local authorities in an expeditious manner to get these nets removed from the river.

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About CCA: Coastal Conservation Association is a non-profit organization comprised of 200 chapters in 17 coastal states spanning the Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic and Pacific coasts. In 2007, CCA expanded into the Pacific Northwest and the organization has quickly grown to more than 9,000 members and continues to launch chapters in both Oregon and Washington. As the largest marine conservation organization in the country, CCA's strength is drawn from the tens of thousands of recreational anglers who make up its membership. Across the country, CCA's grassroots influence is felt through state capitals, U.S. Congress and, most importantly, in the conservation and restoration of our marine resources.