KLICKITAT RIVER OUTING
(for this year’s dates, check the CSF calendar)

Fishmasters: Don and Sherri Starkin, and Sam Stanley

Meeting Place: Stinson Flat: WDFW boat launch and camping area. Look for CSF signs.

Background: The Klickitat River has long been a CSF favorite and our annual autumn outing has been a popular event since 1986. Located in the mid-Columbia sub-basin, the Klickitat begins near Goat Rocks far to the north and draws most of its icy waters from the flanks of Mt Adams. The river's glacial flows once nurtured remarkable runs of spring chinook and summer steelhead...the only fish powerful enough to jump the series of waterfalls near its junction with the Columbia. Men with more federal dollars than sense built a fish ladder around the falls and a major hatchery complex further up-river, introducing non-native coho and fall chinook. More non-native salmon of course means less habitat and rearing capacity for the wild springers and summer runs. This tradition continues with WDFW, the Yakima Nation, and BPA's recent $4.5 million rebuilding of the lower river fish ladder (2010-2012), another attempt at laddering Castle Falls on the upper river, and, of course, lots more hatchery fish from another proposed hatchery to be built on the lower Klickitat.
Remember the nice WDFW fishing access at the mouth of Swale Creek? I could never get a straight answer about why it was closed to the public a over a decade ago, but now we know it is the proposed site of the long planned, though seldom discussed, new hatchery. The hatchery would also mine returning wild fish trapped at the new fish ladder for use as brood stock, putting a “conservation spin” on the program. However, we know all hatchery stocks originated from wild brood and we also know that genetic diversity is lost in just one or two generations. Whether through the use of domesticated hatchery stocks or wild brood, the original wild steelhead or salmon stocks are negatively impacted.

In 1992 CSF, Oregon Trout, and Washington Trout worked together to comment on and eventually quash the Environmental Impact Statement and forward progress for the original incarnation of this hatchery. In July 2011, a new DEIS was issued starting the whole process all over again. A coalition of conservation groups provided over 200 pages of comments on the new DEIS. The comments are now under review. If you care about wild fish you should have a strong interest in what happens. More info available at the outing.

CAMPING: We will be camping at WDFW's Stinson Flat campground on the upper river. There is an outhouse but otherwise the camping is rustic and you will have to bring your own water and picnic table and take home your own trash. Look for the CSF signs, but if you arrive early, we generally camp on the far downstream side of the access area in the big oak clearing. Don and Sherri Starkin will once again be organizing the Saturday evening dinner and members are asked to bring an appetizer, side dish, or bottle of wine to go with the meal.

DIRECTIONS: To get to Stinson Flat, take SR 14 east to just before the little town of Lyle, then follow SR 142 north along the Klickitat River, stopping to fish as needed. After about 20 miles, the road leaves the river and climbs up to "the Plateau." At MP 24, take the left turn at the Glenwood Road fork and follow this for about 10 or 12 curvy miles until the road drops back down towards the river. There will be a WDFW sign marked "Stinson Flat" on your left. Take this gravel road about a mile down to the river and you are there. If you miss the Stinson Flat sign, you will end up crossing the river at Leidel bridge which is also a WDFW boat launch/camping area. In that case, turn these instructions upside down and try again.
THE FISHING: The Klickitat should be running at about 800 cfs or less for ideal flyfishing and 8 or 9 weight rods are about right. Two handed rods are helpful for mending long casts or for fighting the lower river wind. I like dark flies, especially if the river has some glacial runoff...adjusting the size of the fly depending on the color of the river. I’ve had some great evenings fishing bombers and riffle hitched muddlers on the surface and a muddler, especially a black one, might just be the perfect fly for a dry line, wet fly, swing. Some friends have had success with sink tips and weighted flies. You can even sling bobbers if that's your preference.
The Upper Klickitat can be surprisingly cool as the season wanes...bring an extra blanket or sleeping bag if you plan to spend the night. Also be aware that, like the Deschutes, ticks, poison oak, and rattlesnakes can be a problem if you are not paying attention. When driving, especially at night, be aware that the many deer in the area have a penchant for standing in the middle of the road. One last disclaimer....the Klickitat is a powerful river requiring careful wading and floating. If you want to float, be sure to do so with someone familiar with current river conditions...a number of CSF members have sunk and even lost boats when a new tree or boulder ended up in the middle of the drift.

**PARKING PASS:** The use of the area does require a "WDFW vehicle access pass" which is free with the purchase of either a fishing or hunting license in Washington. A Discover Pass will work as well.

For further information, contact Sam Stanley (samstanley59@yahoo.com) or Don Starkin: 509-637-4405 (dstarkin@msn.com).