



**COPPER RIVER
WATERSHED PROJECT**

COPPER RIVER

Runner

FALL 2020

THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF FISH HABITAT RESTORATION

BY SATTI BOWEN, Project Director

As you can imagine, fish spawning and nursery habitats and restoring natural stream functions are the benefits we usually think about when it comes to our watershed-wide fish-habitat restoration work. We are also proud that our habitat restoration work benefits the robust economies of the watershed, including commercial, sport, and subsistence harvest of salmon that fill our fisheries and employ people through the harvest, processing, shipping, and guiding associated with these fisheries.

However, the benefits don't stop there. Each project employs local contractors who hire local residents to help with the implementation of the restoration projects. These employees in turn spend their earnings in their community, paying for housing, meals, household goods, fuel, and entertainment. The economic benefits of investing in habitat restoration creates a ripple effect through communities.

To evaluate the economic impact of our fish passage restoration work over the last 12 years, we have replaced site vehicles and recreational use and replaced it with a low water boat, bringing an estimated \$1,246,000 from federal and state agencies and private foundations to hire local contractors for these important fish passage improvement projects. These funds leveraged additional money from our partners, and based on a study by University of Oregon benefits accrue as these funds cycle through the economy, a factor they refer to as a multiplier effect. This study estimates that for every \$1



million invested, an additional 1.4 to 2.4 times the amount of economic output was generated by benefits to local economy. This translates \$1,246,000 investment (in dollars) in fish passage improvement to an estimated \$4,344,400 to \$2,790,400 for the watershed.

While we are very proud of our past investment in the region's economy, we are also excited for the future, especially given the national downturn in the economy (it is nice to have good news in the face of so many challenges!). We have an additional \$4 million to support up to 10 more fish passage improvements on the Copper River Highway Bridge to the investment by the Brown Valley Off Spill Disaster Council. We are also working to leverage significant contributions from the Alaska Department of Transportation, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and NOAA to raise a total of \$1 million dollars to restore fish passage on the Little Tenmile River. This project will improve access to an estimated 45 miles of upstream habitat for King and Coho Salmon in addition to supporting the regional economy.

None of this investment would have happened without you, our generous donors and members who helped us to develop the capacity to take on these bigger fundraising efforts and major construction projects. Were it not for your support we would not have been able to build the internal capacity and partnerships that have made us so successful in receiving the larger grants for restoration work. So thank YOU for your investment in the health of our watershed and the economies supported by both our restoration work and as tourist watershed.