

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2024-2028



[www.idahorivers.org](http://www.idahorivers.org)

The mission of Idaho Rivers United is to protect and restore the rivers and fisheries of Idaho.

Our strategic wayfinding process guides us to our magnetic north through the lens of climate change, social justice, and native fish recovery.



## OUR MAGNETIC NORTH

**Healthy rivers and clean water are the singular most important resource for every person and every ecosystem.**

The challenges that we face in the coming years and centuries are unlike any we've seen. A changing climate has created devastating fires, floods of epic proportions, and a prolonged drought that is now the new water era. Our native fisheries, including Idaho's once famed salmon and steelhead, are going extinct at rates unprecedented in history. Our scarce water is allocated and prioritized for short-term economic gain at the expense of the long-term health of our ecosystems and communities.

The next five years are some of the most pivotal in the history of IRU, when it comes to protecting the health of our rivers and fisheries and the communities that rely upon them. The impact and reach of IRU needs to grow to meet the challenges that loom ahead - to help engage the communities that are impacted in their backyard, but also to impact policy change at the Federal and State level.

## VALUES

- **Inclusive In Communities**
  - IRU is committed to being a voice for underserved and underrepresented communities across Idaho.
- **Science Based**
  - Science will continue to be the foundation on which our advocacy efforts and policy discussions are shaped.
- **Working With Integrity**
  - IRU will continue to advocate on behalf of our members, both in intention and in action, and between promise and performance in every aspect of the organization.
- **Collaborative Approach to River Management**
  - We understand that the collective power of like-minded groups and individuals is a greater force for change than a singular effort.
- **Empowering Our Membership**
  - We will work to be leaders in all areas of river conservation, and provide the tools to create a cadre of river champions in our membership.

# The next five years...

Our strategic wayfinding process guides us to our magnetic north of protecting rivers and fisheries through the lens of:



## CLIMATE CHANGE

Affects everyone and everything. It impacts the way ecosystems function and highlights the importance of safeguarding and restoring rivers to healthy, free-flowing conditions. The next five years will require collaboration and creative solutions to mitigate the impacts that are forthcoming.



## SOCIAL JUSTICE

Clean water, healthy rivers, and abundant fisheries belong to everyone. Despite this knowledge, the voices of communities of people – whether through race, ethnicity, gender identification, or Tribal affiliation – have been marginalized or silenced. IRU has committed to helping amplify the voices of the communities, shed light on social injustices, advocate for equitable treatment, and be a conduit for these communities for change.



## NATIVE FISH RECOVERY

Despite decades of work and recovery efforts, Idaho's salmon and steelhead are closer than ever to extinction. IRU is committed to solving the salmon crisis in Idaho and working toward ensuring the perpetuation and flourishing of Idaho's native fisheries, through habitat preservation and policy reform.



# Theory of Change

## CONSERVATION PRIORITIES

**Protecting 1/3 of Idaho's rivers and streams** through a permanent protected status, with a focus on wild and scenic eligible sections.

**Removal of the lower Snake River Dams and recovery of Idaho's salmon and steelhead.**

This will be accomplished through a collaboration of administrative efforts, as well as a dedicated effort in the houses of Congress.

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## ENGAGEMENT PRIORITIES

**Expand Urban River Stewards program to every major urban area in Idaho** to foster a deeper relationship between the local watershed and the urban center.

**Nurture and deepen relationships with Indigenous and BIPOC communities** throughout Idaho and provide a forum for their particular advocacy and issues to be addressed.

**Involve these communities further** into the river community whether through whitewater or paddle sports or angling opportunities.

## EXPANSION PRIORITIES

**Increase the number of staff at IRU** to include more conservation and development staff.

**Open a North Idaho and Eastern Idaho satellite office;** or have dedicated staff working remotely in these areas.

**Invest internally in becoming a regional and national leader** on issues such as GHG analysis of the hydro system and Wild & Scenic designation.

# Focus Areas

## Programs & Communications



### Strategy

- Continue to lead on key program issues: salmon recovery, hydropower impacts, and Wild & Scenic Rivers advocacy.
- Recruit board members and advisors with both passion and expertise.
- Stay current on latest science.

### Goals

- Permanent protected status for Lower Salmon River/South Fork Salmon
- Lower Snake River Dam removal.
- Recognition by the U.S. Gov. of GHG emissions from Hydro projects
- Reform of the 1872 Mining Law
- Increase number of Wild and Scenic Miles in Idaho, considerably

## Investing in Staff, Volunteers, & Institution



### Strategy

- Staff monitoring of opportunities to engage in advocacy
- Adherence to the mission statement
- Network to a more diverse set of river and conservation advocates
- Tell our story more often to more people
- Training our Board Members to become ambassadors
- Recruit Tribal members into IRU membership and embedded in staff/Board

### Goals

- Expand our membership
- Audit of staff wages and benefits
- Tribal membership in IRU staff and/or Board
- Provide at least one external PD opportunity to each staff member annually
- Tribal relations and Hydropower positions

# Focus Areas

## Address Climate Change



### Strategy

- Support research into emerging science of emissions of hydropower
- Education of elected officials of the environmental impacts (esp. GHG) of Hydropower and the importance of free-flowing, protected rivers as carbon sequesters
- Understand that science is provisional and adjust messaging and responses as necessary with this emerging science/circumstances

### Goals

- FERC requirement of a GHG analysis for all relicensing and proposals
- Create broad public awareness of the climate impacts of the hydrosystem
- Hire a full-time hydro position
- Developing the tools for our membership, partners, and Tribes to advocate for themselves

## Maximize Resources & Expand Network



### Strategy

- Network to a more diverse set of river and conservation advocates
- Be more engaged in civic community events/listening sessions in rural Idaho
- More Take Action opportunities
- Recognition of past successes and accomplishments
- Upholding bedrock environmental laws such as NEPA, ESA, CWA, etc.
- Staying nimble in our work areas

### Goals

- Increase IRU visibility in rural Idaho
- Develop and post a formal JEDI Statement
- Creation of an Endowment
- Dedicated Moves Management process - cultivation - donor - stewardship
- Update the "About us / Accomplishments" section of the website
- Host a river conference annually or bi-annually