

## HELLO 2026

The end of the year is an excellent time to reflect on how our work has aligned with our founding principles. The Fisheries Conservation Foundation began with a focus on exploring innovative ways to address fisheries challenges, while ensuring that any new approaches would be firmly grounded in evidence-based science. Finding the right balance between healthy aquatic ecosystems and current societal needs is rarely straightforward, and the challenges grow more complex with each passing year. What continues to inspire us is the commitment we see from our partners and allies as we work together toward practical, lasting solutions for our recreational fisheries. That dedication fuels our optimism for the year ahead and gives us hope that future generations will experience the same deep connections to nature we know so well when spending time in our rivers, lakes, and oceans.

Whatever challenges we may face in 2026, we will move forward with renewed energy and a continued commitment to make the world a better place for fish, water, and the people who depend on them.



## GOOD THINGS



**WELCOME** to our new Outreach Associate Brynn Johnson. Brynn brings an extraordinary level of enthusiasm for sharing fish science and we are thrilled to have her on our team.

**CONGRATULATIONS** to FCF Board Chair Dr. David Philipp for receiving the American Fisheries Society Distinguished Service Award in recognition of his exceptional work and steady leadership on the Black Bass 2025 Symposium.



**CONGRATULATIONS** to FCF Board member Dr. Rick Williams on the publication of *Managed Extinction: The decline and loss of wild salmon and steelhead in the Pacific Northwest*. Rick and his co-author, the late Jim Lichatowich, provide an honest assessment on the impacts of modern salmon and steelhead management and an alternative path for their conservation.

## FISH • WATER • PEOPLE

Our belief is that if fish are healthy, then the water is clean and habitats are protected, and that means people can thrive.



Scan here to  
support our work



## INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT FOR RECREATIONAL FISHING

**BASS SPAWNING SANCTUARIES:** Why protect nesting largemouth and smallmouth bass? Over the past three decades, this overarching question has guided much of the work of FCF's black bass research group. Through our long-term research studies, we have gathered evidence showing how bass populations change when angling pressure on nesting fish goes unchecked. These findings led the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to establish two experimental Bass Spawning Sanctuaries in 2024. This past summer, our field teams documented the highly positive effects of the new regulations on bass by comparing reproductive success and recruitment inside and outside the sanctuaries. To be sure that anglers understood the reasons why sanctuaries were in their best interests, FCF, in conjunction with Steve Cooke's Fisheries Lab at Carleton University, have led a variety of communication efforts to educate people living and fishing on these lakes. Our educational materials have included signs, brochures, fliers, websites, webinars, as well as in-person presentations to area lake associations.

**COALITION FOR INNOVATIVE FISHERIES CONSERVATION:** As area anglers and lake associations became aware of the impacts of fishing for nesting bass as well as the status of the bass populations in their home area lakes, a coalition of area partners has been established to expand the Bass Spawning Sanctuary study by gathering data on seventeen potential additional study lakes. This effort began in earnest this past summer, with our research team collecting baseline data, e.g., population size structure, reproductive success, recruitment, rates of illegal angling, and the availability of suitable spawning habitat. Currently, FCF is working with individual Lake Teams to identify potential sites for Bass Spawning Sanctuaries and with the Ministry of Natural Resources to conduct the legal groundwork to formalize the study by Spring of 2027.



*Bass nesting activity and reproductive assessments are conducted by snorkel surveys. This past summer we had 19 lakes to cover - that was a lot of swimming!*



*Learn more about Spawning Sanctuaries as a management strategy by scanning this QR code.*



**Our work is people powered and fish approved**

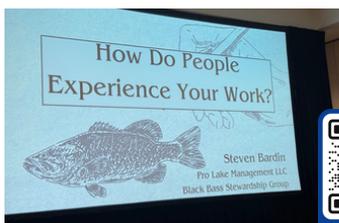
## INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT FOR RECREATIONAL FISHING



Scan this code to view the full symposium program.

**BLACK BASS SYMPOSIUM and the FORMATION OF WORKING TEAMS:** After two years of planning the Black Bass Symposium (BB2025), was held in San Antonio, TX, August 10–14, 2025, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Fisheries Society. Unlike many scientific meetings, the organizers of BB2025 wanted to embrace all the stakeholders in the bass fishing universe, and actively invited industry leaders, business owners, guides, anglers, and the angling media to be a central part of the program. While the symposium offered plenty of the standard 15-minute presentations of findings, successes, challenges, etc., the unique part of the symposium were the interactive sessions. Lively panel and audience discussions centered on the topics of future-proofing black bass management, building a nexus of players in the bass fishing world (recreational anglers, professional tournament fishing, industry, media, researchers, and managers), and embracing new media for education and outreach. The final day of the symposium was called the Bass Summit – a one-day event for 150 participants with a goal of exploring viable solutions for a sustainable future for black bass. Small roundtable teams were organized around eight topics and each team discussed and brainstormed potential solutions, with a final assignment of constructing a plan of action around one of the viable solutions. In the end there were 18 entrepreneurial proposals “pitched” to the group as a whole and entered into a competition for seed money grants to actually initiate the best of the proposed activities. To date, five projects have already received awards, and several more are close to finalizing their proposals, with a total of ten projects being anticipated as receiving a BB2025 seed award.

There are not many opportunities in the fisheries management world for researchers, anglers, fish chiefs, outdoor writers, policy analysts, graduate students, business owners, industry leaders, and media specialists to sit together as equal partners and just have fun sharing their ideas and perspectives. That was part of the magic of the Black Bass Symposium.



Scan this code to watch the three excellent plenaries from the BB2025 by Steven Bardin, Steven Cooke, and Doug Austin.



One of the highlights was a panel of successful podcast leaders that led a lively discussion on their role as liaisons between fisheries management, science, anglers, and the public.

## Your support is what keeps this work going

# FCF 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

## MAHSEER RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

**MAHSEER MIGRATION TRACKING PROJECT:** Bhutan is a land of water. Every summer monsoon rains reshape the rivers in both subtle and dramatic ways. In the last 50 years, other pressures have come into play effecting the health of aquatic wildlife: roads, hydropower, increased access to fishing, sand extraction for cement production, as well as the changing climate - and all are substantially influencing Bhutan's river ecosystems. The question of how best to protect aquatic biodiversity is a pressing one as Bhutan expands their development activities that directly impacts rivers. Our collaborative research project with the Bhutan's Nature Conservation Division has two main goals: 1) to assess annual migration patterns and spawning behaviors of Golden Mahseer and other migratory fish species using radio telemetry, and 2) to help build in-country capacity for Bhutanese in the area of fisheries science and management by supporting field training and resources. If FCF can provide the information needed to make sound strategic decisions on the conservation and management of these majestic fish, then Bhutan can ensure that Mahseer will be another one of their wildlife success stories.



*In spring of 2025, FCF sponsored a field expedition for tagging golden and chocolate mahseer and for visiting each of the receiver stations in the telemetry array to download data and conduct routine maintenance. A big thank you to the wildlife rangers that work on the Sunkosh river and keep this study going throughout the year.*

*Special thanks our project leader, Lungten Dorji (shown in blue) for his tireless work!*



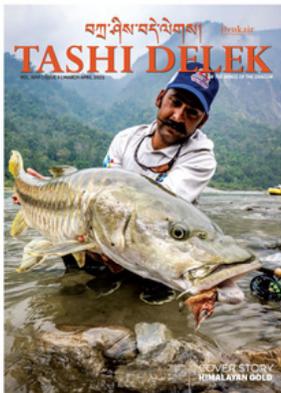
**OUR FALLEN WARRIOR:** This fall we lost one of our treasured comrades and friends in Bhutan. Deo Kumar Gurung, known by most as DK, worked on the mahseer research project from the very start in 2015. Later that year, he was part of a team that FCF sponsored to come to the U.S. to attend an American Fisheries Society conference. In 2024, DK and our project leader Lungten Dorji (both picture here), were awarded an FCF fellowships to travel to Canada and learn more about fisheries research methods. He was fiercely dedicated to Mahseer conservation and the work we do.

We invite you to read our dedication to DK on our website at: <https://fishconserve.org/dedication-to-a-conservation-warrior/>.



# FCF 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

## MAHSEER RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION



Above: The March 2025 issue of the Bhutanese magazine, Tashi Delek, featured a story on Golden Mahseer and recreational fishing.

**RECREATIONAL FISHING IN BHUTAN:** Just two years after we sponsored in-country guide training and worked to establish a recreational fishing program (finalized in 2023), Bhutan has its first dedicated Mahseer fishing lodge. A huge congratulations to FCF Board member, Bryant Dunn, who played a key role in getting the lodge up and running this year. Bryant and his Bhutanese partners understand the power that fishing tourism can have in the country for both enhancing local economies and building community conservation. FCF remains actively engaged in Bhutan's recreational fishing program and in promoting the sustainable management of its fisheries.



Right: The Manas River Lodge sits on the banks of the Mangde Chu.

Best Fishing Practices are an important part of any recreational fishing program. Scan this code to view our guide for Mahseer.



## FLATS ECOLOGY AND CONSERVATION PROGRAM

FCF's work on the saltwater flats ecosystem has uncovered the migration patterns, reproductive behaviors, and spawning aggregation sites of bonefish populations in The Bahamas. Currently, FCF is working on a proposal with the government of Kiribati in partnership with the Christmas Island Lodge to assess the potential for a telemetry study to track flats species in Kiribati. Flats fishing is a large economic driver on Christmas Island. Due to the islands geographical isolation, this research can help understand the best options for the management of their vast flats fisheries.



**100% of your donation goes toward our work in promoting science-based solutions for healthy fisheries.**

# FCF 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

## ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

**SCIENCE COMMUNICATION TRAINING:** This year brought close scrutiny to many scientific programs and highlighted how important it is for scientists to be able to explain why their work matters. It also renewed our drive to help fisheries researchers and managers to share their science stories in ways that are easy to understand and that emphasizes the benefits to society. Over the past several years, FCF has partnered with the American Fisheries Society to equip natural resource professionals with the skills necessary to make their science accessible and for them to engage effectively with a diversity of stakeholders. In 2025, the program offered a range of training opportunities, including:

- **California Delta Fellows Training:** Hands-on, in-person workshop
- **Scientists Promoting Policy, Access, Research, and Knowledge:** An NSF program that emphasized science-driven policy engagement
- **Capstone Train-the-Trainer Program:** Designed to prepare participants to lead communication training sessions
- **Annual Meeting of the American Fisheries Society:** Hands-on, in-person workshop
- **US Forest Service:** Online science communication training



Scan the QR code to learn more about our program.

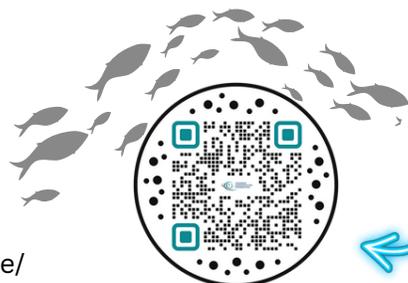


**WORLD FISH MIGRATION DAY** is a global awareness campaign celebrated every two years to highlight the connections that migratory fishes have with human and non-human species, lands, and waters. Join us on **May 23, 2026** to participate in this global celebration and learn about our event: The Heroes of Fish Migration!



## Help Support FCF in 2026

Learn how you can donate at: <https://fishconserve.org/donate/>



Scan here to Donate!