

Introduction

I'm Russ Thurow.

I'm a fisheries research biologist with the Rocky Mountain Research Station, Air, Water and Aquatics program in Boise.

Background

I became interested in the natural world at a very young age.

I was raised on a farm in rural Wisconsin.

My dad was a really excellent naturalist and he instilled in me a interest in the natural world,

a sense of wonder and also a great appreciation for the natural world.

Kind of the focus of my research is to help improve our understanding of linkages between aquatic species responses to their habitat and the natural processes in the landscape.

And I investigate both their response in natural processes such as fires and debris flows as well

as responses to human activities on the landscape.

Research

And my specific area of expertise is with native salmon, trout and steelhead.

One of the really interesting projects that I've been involved with is investigating wild Chinook salmon in the Middle Fork to the Salmon River.

And the Middle Fork lies within the Frank Church River of No Return Wilderness.

And these Chinook salmon populations are very unique.

They migrate farther and spawn at the highest elevation of any other spring, summer, Chinook stock in the world.

The Middle Fork because it's a large wilderness basin, natural processes are allowed to function relatively unimpeded on the landscape.

And what we're seeing is the distribution of reds is very closely tracking the distribution of a lot of these recent debris flows.

So what it suggests to us is although those debris flows seem to be bad to humans and in a place where we have bridges and roads and infrastructure, they can actually do damage.

In a natural setting salmon have actually evolved with those natural processes and they're actually providing essential habitats, in this case spawning gravels for those Chinook salmon populations.

So I think probably the critical piece of this is informing managers and other biologists about these factors that can be used to develop strategically more effective conservation programs, conservation strategies as well as restoration strategies.