

American Fisheries Society

Genetics Section Hall of Excellence



Dr. Jennifer L. Nielsen

After early motherhood, various artistic accomplishments, and work in forestry for Weyerhaeuser Company, Dr. Jennifer Nielsen entered graduate school at UC Berkeley in 1988, age 42. An MSc in animal behavior under Dr. George Barlow led to many new questions including the role of genetics. Working toward her PhD she became involved in the Dr. Alan Wilson Laboratory and started working on DNA. Publication of her PhD Dissertation on mitochondrial DNA analyses of Pacific steelhead throughout California completely changed the way California managed its steelhead fishery. A scientist position at Hopkins Marine Station, Stanford University after graduation helped establish a genetics laboratory dedicated to California trout and salmon. She worked in this capacity for five years until she was hired by US Geological Survey in Anchorage to run their fisheries program where she continued to research fish genetics and ecology in both freshwater and marine fishes. During this period she encouraged the development of DNA labs throughout the US and other countries, working on fish genetics in Mexico, New Zealand, France, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Russia, and South America. She worked in Alaska until 2010 when she retired from USGS and joined the Faculty at The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA. She taught marine biology and sponsored Evergreen students in genetics with an affiliation with Oregon State University's molecular lab in Newport, OR. In 2013, she left all that behind to retire to her grandchildren and the greenhouse in her backyard with no regrets.

Elected into the Genetic Section, Hall of Excellence, 2016