



**ROAD WARRIOR:** Bobby McMullen will help introduce the hourlong documentary about his life at 7 p.m. Saturday at the Cascade Theatre.

Andreas Fuhrmann / Record Searchlight

# 'THE WAY BOBBY SEES IT'

## Documentary follows Redding's Bobby McMullen downhill, through life

By Thom Gabrukiewicz  
Record Searchlight

He picks his way through a fruit salad with his fingers splayed as if he's conjuring the slices of strawberry, apple and Mandarin orange to rise to his gnarled fingers. He pats down the fork and jabs at the baby greens, the avocado, the red bell pepper and shovels home a mouthful.

"Augggh," says Redding's Bobby McMullen. "You know when you're expecting one taste, like a slice of apple and you get a forkful of avocado? Man, you just have to be ready for that when you're me."

"Blind Bobby" is technically "legally

visually impaired."

"I've got 20/1200 vision, that's the best correction they could get in my right eye," he says. "My left eye is pretty worthless."

A diagnosed Type 1 diabetic since he was 12, McMullen lost his sight during his first year of law school in 1993. It was gone in a little over a month from proliferative diabetic retinopathy. The blood vessels in his eyes burst. It is the leading cause of acquired blindness in Americans 65 and younger.

In 1994, he was skiing with the U.S. Disabled Ski Team.

In 1996 at the World Championships, his kidneys failed and he began dialysis.

In 1997, he had his first double trans-

plant — kidney and pancreas; with a new pancreas, he was no longer diabetic.

In 1998, he was back skiing with the U.S. Team and competed in the Paralympics in Nagano, Japan.

In 2001, his body rejected the organs.

In 2003, he received his second double transplant.

In 2004, he entered — and was competitive in — 23 mountain bike races, mostly downhill courses. With a guide who called out obstacles.

"I can hear (the guide) shift and hear their bike rattle," he says. "I don't see any detail, but I can find where they're at. Hearing their voices gives me depth perception and direction better than

anything else."

On Saturday, the 45-year-old McMullen will help introduce the film "The Way Bobby Sees It," an hourlong documentary made by San Francisco Bay area filmmakers Jason Watkins and Wendy Todd, who also will be at the premiere.

"The Way Bobby Sees It" follows the exploits of one balls-out, blind, double-transplant downhill mountain biker. And one independent, confident, homespun, tremendously optimistic and seriously funny human being.

"People ask, 'Do I have a sense of urgency about my life?' No. I'm just a guy

See **MCMULLEN**, C-6

### If you're going

A premiere screening of "The Way Bobby Sees it," a documentary on Redding's blind downhill mountain biker Bobby McMullen, is set for Saturday at the Cascade Theatre.

- Tickets are \$10 each and can be purchased at Carnegie's, local bike shops, Holiday Front Street Market on Placer Street and at the Cascade Theatre box office from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday.

- People also can buy tickets by telephone at 243-8877.

- Doors open at 6 p.m.; it is an open-seating show.

- Special guests include Bobby McMullen and filmmakers Jason Watkins and Wendy Todd.

- All proceeds will benefit the FOCUS Film Festival; for more information, go to [www.farnorthernrc.org/focusfilmfestival](http://www.farnorthernrc.org/focusfilmfestival).

- To look at a trailer of "The Way Bobby Sees It," go to [www.YouTube.com](http://www.YouTube.com).



Photos courtesy of Bobby McMullen

**BOBBY'S WILD RIDE:** Technically, he isn't blind but legally visually impaired, but that hasn't stopped McMullen from participating in mountain biking. When he rides, like these shots from Whistler, British Columbia, McMullen is usually guided by another rider, in this case Santa Cruz-sponsored freerider Jamie Goldman.

## Meeting to help decide if there's to be a 2008 salmon season

The Department of Fish and Game will host a public meeting Wednesday in Santa Rosa that will help decide, in part, the fate of the 2008 salmon fishing season.

Whether there's a recreational season on the Sacramento River at all and whether the ocean season, which opened Feb. 16, will continue.

The meeting is scheduled from 1-5 p.m. Wednesday in the Sonoma County Water Agency offices at 404 Aviation Blvd. in Santa Rosa.

The meeting, which will be staffed by the DFG, the Pacific Fisheries Management Council and the National Marine Fisheries

Service, will address the status of California salmon populations and the outlook for both river and ocean fisheries. This annual meeting follows January reports where federal fishery regulators say the number of chinook salmon returning to the Sacramento River and its tributaries last fall was astonishingly low. A collapse of the fishery.

This collapse could prompt severe fishing restrictions — and economic hardships for fishermen and related businesses — all the way from the Canadian border to California's Central Valley.

And includes north state guides, anglers and other businesses that depend on the recreational salmon season, which traditionally opens July 16 each year on the Sacramento River.

The meeting officially begins the two-month-long process to establish salmon fishing seasons.

The number of adult king, or chinook, salmon returning to the state's Central Valley rivers and streams to spawn fell to historic lows last year — and regulators warn this year's return might not be much better.

Some people blame water exports pumped from the fragile Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta to Southern California; others blame shifting ocean conditions and global warming for the decline. Whatever the case, the economy of salmon is huge in California.

"You bet we're nervous," said Redding guide Gary Manies, who also owns Strictly Fishin' tackle shop off Athens Avenue. "Salmon, I'd say, accounts for two-thirds of our business. No season, after last year's bad year, and we'll all be in bad shape."

California's recreational sport-

fishing industry generates well over \$2 billion a year — and that's just direct spending by anglers in the state, according to a January report released by California Trout. It's estimated that each salmon caught in the Sacramento River — the historical limit has been two salmon a day — is worth about \$700 to the local economy.

The meeting is open to the public and will follow the following schedule:

- Introduction, agenda and proposed outcomes.
- California Salmon Council Report.
- A review of the 2007 commercial catch and 2008 ocean abundance forecasts and outlook for the 2008 commercial harvest.
- Forty-five minute breakout discussions with staff, where the media will have an opportunity to ask questions.

- A panel presentation by the Pacific Fisheries Management Council on the preferred 2008 season.

"My guess is, they're going to close the ocean to fishing and maybe restrict us guides to one fish an angler," Manies said. "Or, they just might close it up altogether."

"Look, this happened all in California, and it's going to hurt all the way up the coast to Washington," Manies continued. "Unless there's some economic help, I'm devastated, along with a lot of other guys."

The stakes are high. If you've got a stake in salmon, you need to be in Santa Rosa on Wednesday.

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