



COLUMBIA RIVERKEEPER
111 Third Street
Hood River, OR 97031
phone 541.387.3030
www.columbiariverkeeper.org

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Contact:

Brett VandenHeuvel, Executive Director, Columbia Riverkeeper, 503.348.2436,
bv@columbiariverkeeper.org

Columbia Riverkeeper and Army Corps Reach Settlement to End Uncontrolled Oil Pollution Seeping from Columbia and Snake River Dams

New Settlement will Slash Toxic Pollution in Columbia and Snake Rivers; Has Wide Ranging Implications for Dams Nationwide

PORTLAND, OR— A groundbreaking settlement announced today between Columbia Riverkeeper and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will guarantee an end to uncontrolled toxic oil leakage at eight Columbia and Snake River dams, finally bringing some of the nation's biggest dams into compliance with the Clean Water Act. The Army Corps is the largest owner-operator of dams in the United States, meaning the settlement could signal a new era of accountability for hydro dams across the country. These dams have leaked oil into rivers since the facilities were constructed -- endangering public health and threatening fish and wildlife.

"This is a groundbreaking agreement for clean water," said Brett VandenHeuvel, Columbia Riverkeeper's Executive Director. "For years, the Army Corps has allowed harmful oil pollution to flow into the Columbia and Snake Rivers, and finally that will stop. With the dams coming into compliance with the Clean Water Act, we will see an end to toxic discharges and chronic seepage of pollutants that have been harming our communities."

Highlights of the new settlement include:

- **EPA oversight:** Within one year, the Army Corps must apply to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for Clean Water Act permits for eight of the largest dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Currently, there is little to no oversight.
- **Pollution limits:** The Clean Water Act permits will limit the amount of oil and toxic pollution discharged by the dams. The permits will require the Army Corps to install "best available technology" to control spills.
- **Pollution monitoring:** For the first time the Army Corps must monitor the amount of pollution being discharged into the largest rivers in the Pacific Northwest.

- **Environmentally friendly oil:** The Army Corps must switch from using toxic petroleum products as lubricants in dams to using vegetable other biodegradable oils if the Army Corps determines switching is feasible.

Today's settlement comes a year after Columbia Riverkeeper first sued to end this unchecked pollution. The original suit described dozens of oil spills and chronic oil leaks at the dams. For example, in 2012, the Army Corps reported discharging over 1,500 gallons of PCB-laden transformer oil at the Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River. According to the EPA, PCBs cause cancer, as well as a variety of other adverse health effects on the immune system, reproductive system, nervous system, and endocrine system. The oil from the Ice Harbor spill contained PCBs at levels 14,000,000% greater than state and federal chronic water quality standards.

Columbia Riverkeeper is a nonprofit organization working to protect and restore the Columbia River and all life connected to it. Columbia Riverkeeper is a member of Waterkeeper Alliance, the world's fastest growing environmental movement, uniting more than 200 Waterkeeper organizations around the world and focusing citizen action on issues that affect our waterways, from pollution to climate change. Columbia Riverkeeper is represented in this action by Smith & Lowney, PLLC, and in-house counsel.

The legal documents for this case, including the settlement agreement filed with the court today are available <http://columbiariverkeeper.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Proposed-Order-with-Settlement-Agreement.pdf>.

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