

# COLUMBIA RIVERKEEPER®

RIVER CURRENTS | Fall 2014 Newsletter

# VICTORY!



## This Issue:

**Victory: Coal export permit denied!**

**National news: Dams clean up their act! Riverkeeper's "historic" and "precedent setting" win**

**"She Who Watches" tours**

**Columbia Riverkeeper** is a non-profit organization working to protect and restore the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean.

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Join the conversation and keep up with the latest from Columbia Riverkeeper!



# River Notes

## A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

We did it. Together. On August 18<sup>th</sup>, the State of Oregon rejected Ambre Energy's coal export plan.

This is a defining win for clean water, salmon, our communities, and our climate. Thank you for helping make it happen! You've made the Pacific Northwest a cleaner and more sustainable place. I'm extremely proud of this success and you should be too.

Take a deep breath and think about all that we accomplished. We said "no" to dirty coal trains and barges. "No" to climate-wrecking coal export. "Yes" to a healthy river, clean energy, and a coal-free future.

This victory was an incredible team effort. Our Power Past Coal coalition created a unified force of organizations, businesses, and everyday folks who stood together for something bigger than themselves.

Columbia Riverkeeper is proud to be part of this effort.

RIVERKEEPER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, Brett VandenHeuvel



Cover: Artist Nina Montenegro created this artwork for Riverkeeper to celebrate the State of Oregon's rejection of coal export on August 18, 2014.

# River Otters & Toxics

by Emily Long, Water Quality Assistant

Take some time away from your busy week and sit along the banks of the Columbia. You will likely see people enjoying the river and, if you are patient, a variety of wildlife. If patient enough, or having a lucky day, you may see river otters on the Columbia River or tributaries. These sleek and playful animals often hunt and travel in small family groups.

Because of their diet and aquatic lifestyle, river otters are very sensitive to the negative effects of water pollution. River otters eat mostly fish, but also prey on other aquatic animals like frogs, insects, and shellfish. When toxic pollutants like polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs) and insecticides reach the river, they are often consumed by fish and shellfish which, in turn, are eaten by river otters. Over time, even relatively low levels of pollution in fish can accumulate to dangerous levels in the bodies of river otters. Several studies show that toxic pollution can damage river otters' growth, development, and reproduction.



*River Otter, photos by Deanna Lynch, USFWS*



Pollution can impact all aspects of the Columbia River ecosystem, from the smallest microbes up through the food chain to river otters, eagles, and even humans. To protect ourselves and other animals that depend on a clean Columbia, Oregon and Washington set water quality standards based, in part, on how much fish people can safely eat. People in the Pacific Northwest eat a lot of locally caught fish, and Oregon's water quality standards are the most protective in the nation. Sadly, Washington continues to refuse to protect its citizens from the threat of toxic pollution in fish.

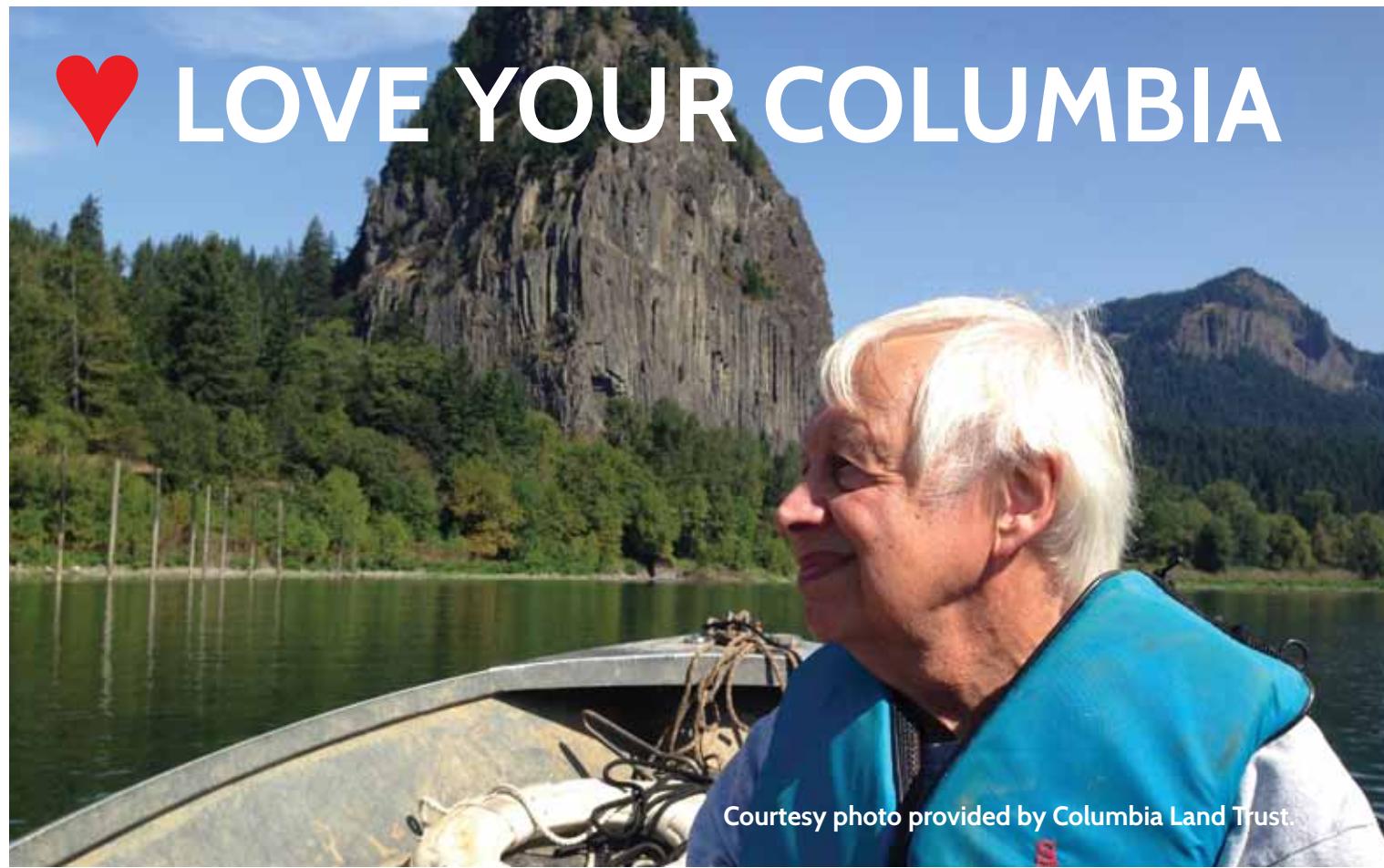
To understand how toxic pollution in fish reaches citizens of the Pacific Northwest, Riverkeeper asked local fisherman to donate fish caught in the Columbia for laboratory testing. Fish are tested for toxic chemicals like mercury, lead, and flame retardants. Lab results show that many Columbia River fish—fish that were actually headed for peoples' dinner tables—contain pollution levels much higher than the Environmental Protection Agency considers safe. Riverkeeper will continue educating the public about potential health risks from toxic water pollution. We won't stop until we make the Columbia safe for fish, river otters, and the people who rely on the river.

# Riverkeeper Happenings

There is never a dull moment on the Columbia! Here are some highlights.



## LOVE YOUR COLUMBIA



Courtesy photo provided by Columbia Land Trust.

The first annual Love Your Columbia Day, on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, was a huge success! Communities along the Columbia joined in solidarity to clean up, restore, and celebrate the mighty river. Volunteers and event partners hosted more than a dozen activities and cleanup efforts in Canada, Washington, and Oregon.

**Friend us! Follow us!** Join us in the social media sphere on **Facebook**, **Twitter**, **YouTube**, and **LinkedIn**.



Johnson Creek Cleanup, photo by Carl Richter, Johnson Creek Watershed Group.



## FACTS:

**11,420 pounds  
(over 5 tons) of  
litter removed\***



**538 people  
participated**



**1,119 volunteer  
hours 8.1 acres  
of invasive  
plants pulled**



\* This estimate does not include the weight of materials like mattresses, tires, or woody debris/vegetation.



**Support our work to protect and restore the Columbia River.  
Make a donation today at: [www.columbiariverkeeper.org/donate](http://www.columbiariverkeeper.org/donate)**

# Riverkeeper Happenings

(continued)



## Farm to Table Dinner

The MacGregor Farm orchestrated a lovely Farm to Table dinner featuring local produce prepared by Portland-based chefs. Proceeds from the sold-out event will help protect family farms and salmon habitat at Port Westward, Oregon, from polluting industries like coal and oil.

Farm to Table dinner to Save Port Westward at MacGregor Farm, near Port Westward, Columbia County, Oregon. From left to right, Scott MacGregor and Tanner Dykes. Photo by Mark Eifert.

Stay up-to-date on all Columbia River happenings by joining our mailing list at [www.columbiariverkeeper.org/stay-informed](http://www.columbiariverkeeper.org/stay-informed).

## Canvass Hits the Road to Oppose LNG in Astoria

Our Canvass Team hit the road for Astoria this summer to oppose the proposed Oregon LNG export terminal. The goal was to spark renewed energy in the Astoria community for the fight against LNG, and results were incredible; 71 percent of Riverkeeper members that we talked to renewed their memberships! We also found many new supporters who learned about the urgency of the LNG fight.

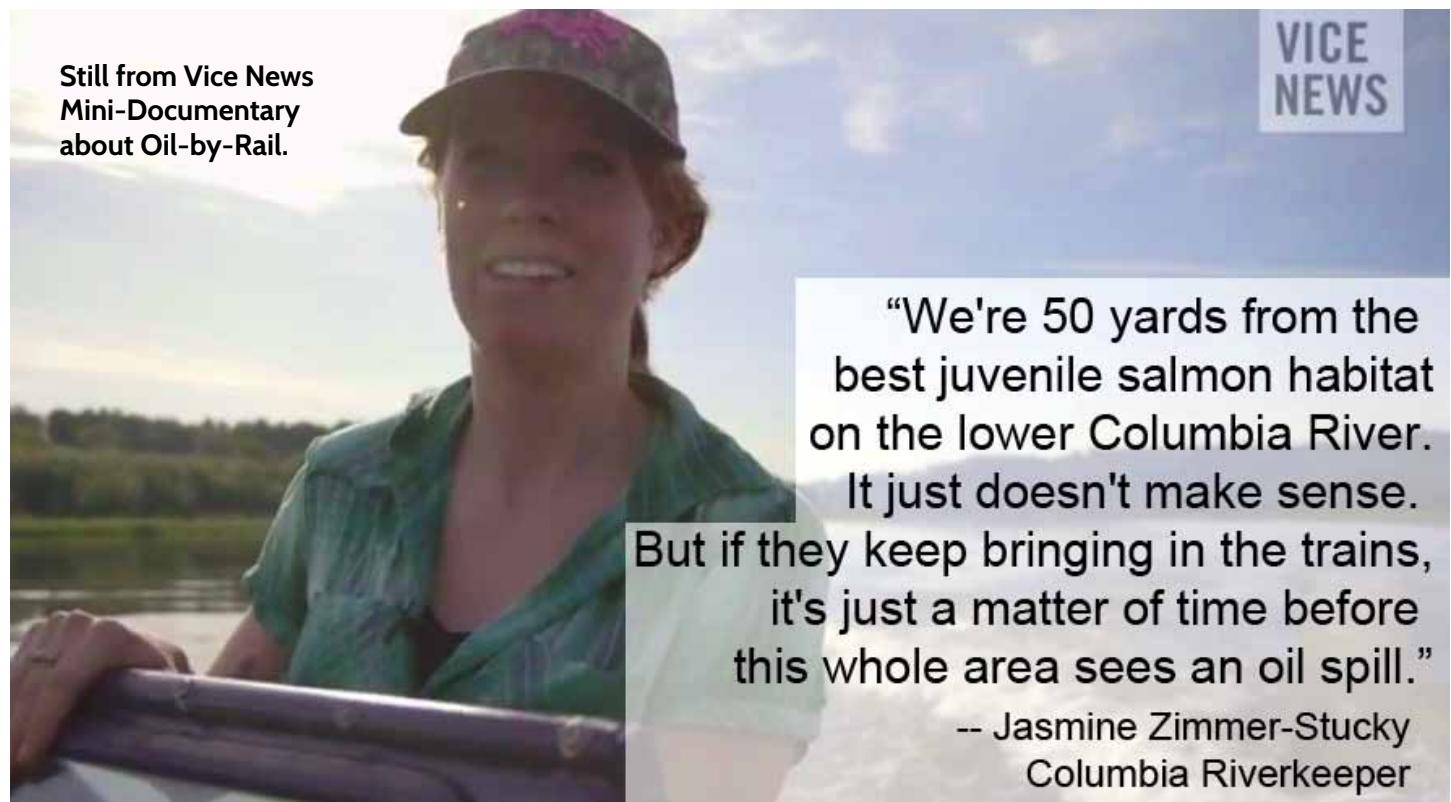


Astoria LNG Canvass Crew in July.

Courtesy photo provided by Columbia Riverkeeper.

## Riverkeeper Featured in Oil-by-Rail Mini-Documentary by Vice News

Columbia Riverkeeper's Community Organizer, Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky, was featured in Vice News' recent documentary about oil-by-rail. The film examines the existing oil terminal at Port Westward, Oregon, and the proposed terminal at the Port of Vancouver, Washington. On screen, Zimmer-Stucky tours the Port Westward oil terminal in Riverkeeper's patrol boat and points out threats to local farms and prime juvenile salmon habitat. Watch the 15-minute feature online: [news.vice.com/video/bomb-trains](http://news.vice.com/video/bomb-trains).





# KEEPING COAL AND CRUDE OIL off the Columbia...*for Good*

By Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky, Community Organizer

Oregon recently closed its doors to coal export by denying the Morrow Pacific coal export project. It's time for Washington to follow suit. Oregon's Governor Kitzhaber announced, "it's time once and for all to say no to coal export." The Oregon Department of State Lands denied a critical dock construction permit, and the Oregon Transportation Commission refused to subsidize building a coal dock at Port Westward, Oregon.

Oregon's victory is a blow to the coal industry's attempt to turn our region into a dirty coal chute to Asia. Fueled by this success, communities along the Columbia are also standing up against the rising threat of explosive oil trains and crude oil shipping on the Columbia. Project investors should take note of Oregon's victory over coal: the Columbia River is no place for coal dust, oil train explosions, or crude oil spills.

Ambre Energy, the Australian coal company pushing the Morrow Pacific project, is also behind the much-larger coal export terminal in Longview, Washington. Ambre hoped for a much-needed financial infusion from Morrow Pacific; without it, the coal export proposal in Longview is Ambre's last hope. Ambre cloaks its involvement in Longview's 44-million ton coal export proposal by using the name Millennium Bulk Terminals.

Ambre's plans for Longview involve massive, uncovered coal piles several stories high along the river and within two miles of homes, little league parks, and schools. Uncovered coal trains would block access to the Lewis and Clark Bridge into Oregon up to 16 times a day. And don't forget that

Millennium got caught lying about how much coal it would actually handle. Ambre called its Morrow Pacific project "doing business the Oregon way." If Ambre thinks its proposed terminal in Longview is "doing business the Washington way," Ambre is both insulting and misjudging Washington's commitment to healthy, livable communities.

Ambre's coal export terminal in Longview is even more controversial than the rejected Oregon proposal. Over 1,000 people spoke out against coal export at a public hearing in Longview last September, and the public wrote a stunning 215,000 comments to decisionmakers, mostly in opposition to the project. Currently, Washington agencies are preparing an in-depth Environmental Impact Statement that will examine threats ranging from coal mining, train traffic, health impacts from coal dust, greenhouse gas emissions, mercury pollution, and more.

Oregon has led the way by standing up to Ambre Energy, but the fight against coal export in the Pacific Northwest is far from over. And the fight against dirty, dangerous crude oil is just beginning. Fortunately, Washington's Governor Inslee has the authority to close the door to coal export and crude-by-rail proposals in Washington. Now is the time for Governor Inslee to stand up for public health, for the Columbia River, and for our climate by rejecting coal export and oil terminals in Washington.

Call Governor Jay Inslee today at 360-902-4111 and tell him that standing up to dirty coal and oil is the right thing to do. ♦

# How you are fighting (AND WINNING) against coal

By Brett VandenHeuvel, *Executive Director*

**Your voice was heard.** Oregon denied Ambre Energy's dirty coal export terminal. This is a huge victory. Give yourself a pat on the back.

**How did this happen?** The short answer is: "*because you cared.*"

You and tens of thousands of your friends and allies decided that coal export is too harmful to our region and our climate. You set records for the most people at hearings and the most public comments, you made visibility events colorful and fun, and, ultimately, you convinced Governor Kitzhaber that shipping coal down the Columbia is unacceptable.

You also supported Columbia Riverkeeper. You supported detailed legal analysis by our lawyers, who discovered that Oregon was not using its full authority over coal export. Our lawyers:

- Submitted detailed legal and scientific arguments on why Oregon should deny the Ambre dock-building permit;
- Successfully argued to Oregon that Ambre's downstream dock is located on a public-owned riverbank and therefore needs a lease; and
- Pressured Oregon to use all of its powers, including Clean Water Act permits, that Oregon considered waiving.

You supported Riverkeeper's legal and policy team's relentless engagement in each decision point. Working with allies at Power Past Coal, Riverkeeper made sure your voice was present every step along the way. The coal company wanted to take shortcuts. We said no. The coal company distorted the facts and the law. We responded with solid facts and law. Together, we battled toe to toe with coal-company

lawyers and public relations firms. At the end of the day, we celebrated together. And Ambre? They filed a desperate lawsuit against the State of Oregon for having the commonsense to say that coal export is unacceptable on the Columbia River.

## You earned it.

Please don't forget how special this victory is. Prevailing over coal was not inevitable. You earned it. While coal export may seem like the worst idea possible, a lot of harmful projects are permitted in the Pacific Northwest because corporations are powerful, and clean water and clean air are undervalued. Together, we are changing that equation. We are showing what is possible when we stand united for a better world.

## What's next?

The fight is not over. Ambre sued Oregon. So did the State of Wyoming and the Port of Morrow. Columbia Riverkeeper and allies will intervene to defend the State's denial of Ambre Energy. We believe the Department of State Lands properly denied Ambre Energy's permit to build a coal export dock. There are multiple reasons why Ambre's proposal does not comply with Oregon law, including the unacceptable impact to salmon, the dock would destroy a traditional fishing site, and coal export is not the best use of our river. Ambre will argue that Oregon was unfair, that traditional fishing sites don't matter, and that the Constitution prohibits Oregon from even requiring permits. These are desperate arguments from a desperate industry.

As you know, two coal export proposals—the biggest two—still remain and are marching forward. Our job is not over. But winning is contagious. And there is now a line in the sand. You've protected our river and climate from dirty coal export once, and you can do it again. ♦

# {Victory Parties}

On August 18<sup>th</sup>, the Oregon Department of State Lands dealt a severe blow to Ambre Energy's proposed Morrow Pacific coal export terminal. To celebrate, we had victory parties in Hood River and Portland. During the events we took time to thank Governor Kitzhaber and Director Abrams for their leadership. T-shirts and posters showing a win for communities and the river were designed by Portland-based activist and designer, Nina Montenegro.

## VICTORY!



▲ "Victory" logo designed by artist Nina Montenegro.

◀ Chris Winter, Co-Executive Director & Staff Attorney of Crag Law Center; Suzanne Savell, Development Director of Crag Law Center.

Victory Picnic Potluck, August 26 at Laurelhurst Park in Portland.



We asked you to share your thoughts on the Coal Victory with DSL Director Mary Abrams and Governor Kitzhaber. Over 600 folks responded. Here is what some of you wrote about this win:

"People and the Columbia River have co-existed for at least 15,000 years but only in modern times have we developed the means to destroy the river's life as well as ourselves. We have also developed the means and desire to repair what we have damaged and improve the river as habitat for all life it supports, including our own. Thank you Governor Kitzhaber and DSL Director Mary Abrams for making the right choice for the Columbia!"

—Will of Astoria, OR

"I am a landowner and a member of the Northern Cheyenne Tribe along the Tongue River in southeastern Montana that is threatened with the proposed Otter Creek Coal Mine idea and the proposed railroad that would run directly along the river opposite from my land! I appreciate you for your

brave and intelligent actions recently when you denied a permit to the proposed Morrow Pacific for coal export! These kinds of wonderful actions help us save our lands, waters, air and our precious children! I thank you, I thank you!"

—Alaina of Billings, MT

"I care about my environment! Reducing our carbon footprint is even more critical, it's time to say 'no' to big business and live like we care about our planet!"

—Holly of Cape Coral, FL

"Hallelujah!! A wise decision for the good of the river and humankind here and abroad. Thanks for doing what you can when you can to guard and preserve the beauty Mother Nature has given us. Thank you!!!"

—Fritz and Janice of Clatskanie, OR

"Our grandchildren also thank you...to the seventh generation and beyond."

—Celeste of Hillsboro, OR

"As a third generation native Oregonian, I am so pleased that there may be a place for future generations."

—Arnold of Hoquiam, WA

# {Victory Parties} (continued)



Thank you Governor Kitzhaber. Victory Party,  
August 20 at PintShack in Hood River.

## Quotes about the victory:

"I live within 100 yards of the railroad tracks that pass through Mosier, OR and I do not want dirty coal and explosive oil being moved through my town. Thank you for your help in preserving the life-style that many of us moved to Oregon to enjoy."

**-Darrell of Mosier, OR**

"Our people thank you. Chief Carl Sampson, Headman of the Wallulapum Tribe (Yellowbird-Peo-Peo-Mox-Mox) CTUIR at Pendleton, Oregon."

**-Cathy of Pendleton, OR**

"As a mother, potential grandmother and neighbor to train tracks, I am so happy about this outcome!"

**-Lori of Portland, OR**

"As a neuroscientist, I know that coal is a major source of mercury, lead and arsenic contamination of our air and water that has serious health consequences, particularly for child brain development."

Your decision protects not only fish and tribal rights, but the health of all citizens of the Northwest. Thank you for protecting us against this threat."

**-Martha of Portland, OR**

"Clean air and water for my brand new baby!"

**-Natalie of Portland, OR**

"Congratulations to the entire region for this decision. As someone who has been fortunate to circumnavigate the planet; I still am awed when traveling through the Gorge. How else to ensure such a unique part of the world is untainted than to eliminate the potential for disaster. As long as any substance of substantial environmental impact travels the rails of the Gorge there will be 100% risk of an accident occurring - just a matter of time. This decision will move this natural wonder closer to the protection it justly deserves."

**-George of Portland, OR**

# VICTORY! Dams Cleanup their Oil!

By Miles Johnson,  
*Clean Water Attorney*

Columbia Riverkeeper  
and Army Corps Reach  
Settlement to Slash  
Toxic Pollution in  
Columbia and  
Snake Rivers

On August 2, 2014, Riverkeeper and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reached a landmark settlement agreement to slash toxic oil pollution in the Columbia and Snake rivers. The New York Times said Riverkeeper's victory has "national implications" and Bloomberg Businessweek called it "historic." In total, over 300 media outlets from the U.S. to the UK, Japan, and Russia covered Riverkeeper's big win.

"Columbia Riverkeeper's settlement has implications for dams operating without pollution permits across the country," stated Melissa Powers, environmental law professor at Lewis and Clark Law School and expert in the federal Clean Water Act. "Like any industrial facility, dams are prohibited from discharging pollution until they obtain pollution permits."

This settlement comes a year after Riverkeeper first sued to end unchecked pollution from 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 polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB)-laden transformer oil from Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River. According to the EPA, PCBs cause cancer and 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.

## What Riverkeeper's Win Means for Clean Water

"Columbia Riverkeeper's settlement demonstrates the power of citizen groups to hold government agencies accountable when other government regulators—here the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—sit on their hands," stated Reed Super, a veteran environmental attorney and Legal Director for the international Waterkeeper Alliance. "Of course the Clean Water Act applies to federal facilities like hydroelectric dams that discharge oil pollution." The settlement requires:

- **EPA oversight:** Within one year, the Army Corps must apply to the EPA for Clean Water Act permits for eight of the largest dams on the Columbia and Snake Rivers.
- **Pollution limits:** The Clean Water Act permits will limit the amount of oil and toxic pollution discharged by the dams.
- **Pollution monitoring:** The Army Corps must monitor the amount and toxicity of oil discharged into the largest rivers in the Pacific Northwest.
- **Environmentally friendly oil:** The Army Corps must consider switching from toxic petroleum products to using vegetable oil or other biodegradable oils. If it is feasible to use environmentally friendly oil, the Army Corps must switch.

## Dams impacted by the settlement:



# Honoring the Columbia's Rich Cultural Heritage, Thanking our Donors

Riverkeeper donors experience one of the region's greatest Native American storytellers, Ed Edmo, on tours of the Columbia Hills State Park petroglyphs

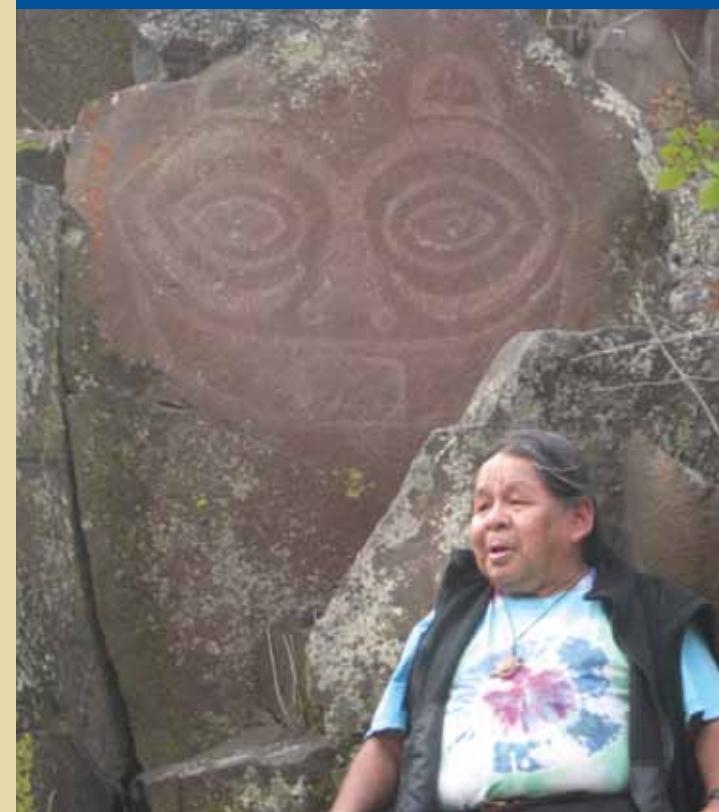
By Lauren Goldberg,  
Staff Attorney

Ed Edmo begins to speak and the only perceptible noise is the sound of the wind mixed with Ed's voice. The crowd is mesmerized. A group of forty Columbia Riverkeeper donors crowd together to hear stories passed down over generations. Ed is keeping the past alive as we hike through one of the region's richest collections of Native American petroglyph and pictographs. Ed, a member of the Shoshone-Bannock who grew up at Celilo Village along the Columbia's shores, shares ancient legends from the Warm Springs, Nez Perce, Yakama Nation, and other Columbia River tribes. It is these same tribes who advocated for the State of Oregon to respect treaty fishing rights and deny the key permit for Ambre Energy's Morrow Pacific coal export terminal.

Following the stunning coal export victory in mid-August, we were moved to plan special outings to honor our larger donors. Riverkeeper's private tour of the Columbia Hills State Park petroglyphs was our staff's small way of thanking the people who make our work possible.

Columbia Hills State Park, located on the Washington side of the Columbia River Gorge just upstream of The

The site is sacred—home to one of the region's most remarkable collections of ancient petroglyphs and pictographs, including "She Who Watches."



Dalles, is a fitting site to reflect on the Columbia's rich cultural heritage and our shared vision of a coal-free future. The site is sacred—home to one of the region's most remarkable collections of ancient petroglyphs and pictographs, including "She Who Watches." The park is also adjacent to the railroad tracks where Riverkeeper collected piles of coal from passing trains en route to Washington's only coal-fired power plant in Centralia.

During two private tours over Labor Day weekend, Ed Edmo, a longtime Riverkeeper supporter whose daughter, Se-ah-dom Edmo, served on Riverkeeper's Board of Directors, led over sixty Riverkeeper members on an interpretive hike of the of otherwise restricted area. People were visibly moved by Ed's words. As the shadows shifted on the basalt outcroppings bearing testament to the past, we gathered together with a deep sense of respect and gratitude for the remarkable region we call home.

We want to extend a big thank you to Memaloose Wines who generously donated a tasting and the use of their tasting room so we could gather to share thoughts and stories with each other and Ed after the tour. If you have the chance please visit them in Lyle and enjoy one of their fine wines while overlooking the Klickitat River and support this family venture.



**Ed, a member of the Shoshone-Bannock who grew up at Celilo Village along the Columbia's shores, shares ancient legends from the Warm Springs, Nez Perce, Yakama Nation, and other Columbia River tribes**





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Columbia River Gorge  
Photo by Paloma Ayala