

COLUMBIA RIVERKEEPER®

RIVER CURRENTS | 2015 Issue 1



This Issue:

- Clean Water Act-ion: Stopping Illegal Pollution
- Ten Years of Troubled Waters for Oregon LNG
- River Interview: Fisher Poet Dave Densmore

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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with the latest from
Columbia Riverkeeper!



River Notes

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Clean water is no laughing matter

We've all heard jokes about ambulance-chasing lawyers. But Riverkeeper's attorneys track down illegal pollution. And make it stop. The law is a powerful tool, why shouldn't we use it for good? Check out the article by our Clean Water Attorney, Miles Johnson, on page 6. I love the fact that we have a Clean Water Attorney on our side. Because of your support, we can dedicate an attorney to fight pollution every day. We stop pollution with action, not aspirations.

Three per year

In 2015, Riverkeeper will produce three print newsletters per year instead of four. Switching to three will increase the quality of the content, reduce staff time invested, and conserve resources. Some folks like to receive information online, and some people prefer print. So we try to strike a balance. I hope you continue to enjoy the print newsletter, as well as our monthly e-newsletter. Let us know if you have suggested improvements or if you have communications preferences. Contact info@columbiariverkeeper.org.

RIVERKEEPER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, Brett VandenHeuvel

Cover: "Moonlight Swimmers" by Charlotte Van Zant-King. For more information go to charlottevanzantking.com.

Back: Photo by Russ Ricketts of River Snorkel. For more information go to vimeo.com/riversnorkel.

Media Year in Review: 2014 was a Big Year for Riverkeeper

Across the nation, people are taking notice of our work on the Columbia thanks to your support. Here is a look at our work through the lens of media coverage from 2014.

The New York Times

"We have a very large project that is directly pitted against the oil terminal," said Brett VandenHeuvel, the executive director of Columbia Riverkeeper. *NY Times*, 12/28/14, "Race to Build on River Could Block Pacific Oil Route"

AP

"People regularly eat salmon and other fish caught just offshore and downstream of Energy Northwest's facility," said Dan Serres of Columbia Riverkeeper.

Associated Press, 10/30/14, "Environmental groups sue over effects of Hanford nuclear reactor on water"



Dan Serres, Columbia Riverkeeper conservation director, whose

advocacy group intervened on behalf of Clatsop County, said Oregon LNG is dead in the water if the decision stands. "Realistically, it's very unlikely LUBA will be able to overturn each of the counts," Serres said. "They would have to find that Clatsop County was wrong on every count. That seems unlikely." *Daily Astorian*, 12/17/14, "Oregon Court of Appeals sides with Clatsop County in LNG fracas"

The Oregonian

"Oregonians today should be proud that our state stood up to protect salmon, fishing, and clean water over dirty coal," said Brett VandenHeuvel, executive director of Columbia Riverkeeper.

The Oregonian, 8/18/14, "Oregon Dept. of State Lands denies Ambre Energy coal terminal permit"



"Fish advisories are not enough. We have to clean up the river,"

Lorri Epstein, Riverkeeper's water quality director says. "You can keep issuing advisories, but people are going to keep eating fish."

Columbia Basin Fish & Wildlife News Bulletin, 10/3/14, "Columbia Riverkeeper Study Analyzes Toxic Levels in Five Columbia River Fish Species"

Los Angeles Times

"This is a huge day for clean water," said Brett VandenHeuvel, Columbia Riverkeeper's executive director. "For years, the dams have discharged harmful oil pollution into the Columbia and Snake rivers, and finally that will stop. With the dams coming into compliance with the Clean Water Act, hopefully we will see an end to toxic spills and chronic seepage of pollutants that have been harming our community."

LA Times, 8/4/14, "Army Corps of Engineers to monitor dam water pollution in Northwest"

Bloomberg Businessweek

"The Columbia River Estuary is at the center of an unprecedented effort to site dirty energy export projects in the most critical salmon nurseries in the Pacific Northwest," said Brett VandenHeuvel, Riverkeeper's executive director. "Dirty fossil fuel projects are a direct affront to our region's fishing heritage and effort to recover endangered salmon." *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 9/2/14, "Oregon land use board rejects Port of St. Helens industrial expansion plans"

Riverkeeper Happenings

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



Riverkeeper partnered with Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership and Project YESS (Youth Employability Support Services) to complete a habitat restoration project.

In the Field with Riverkeeper: Restoration Projects

This fall, Riverkeeper partnered with the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership and Project YESS (Youth Employability Support Services) to complete a habitat restoration project at Benson State Recreation Area near Multnomah Falls. Project YESS assists at-risk youth in gaining valuable career experience and guidance.

For three years, Riverkeeper has worked with Project YESS crews to help restore Wahkeena Creek. We removed overgrown, invasive blackberries and saw the revitalization of the creek through restoration projects and redesign. This year, as our crew restored riparian habitat by planting over 1,100 native dogwoods, willows, and cottonwoods, we saw first-hand the impacts of our efforts. Looking down into the water, we watched pairs of spawning salmon building redds in the newly-restored creek.

This project was made possible with funding from East Multnomah Soil and Water Conservation District. A huge thank you to the crew members and partners on this successful project!

Survivor Totem Pole

The 15-foot tall Survivor Totem Pole was carved by Rex Losey and his son Ray in 1977. It was donated to Greenpeace to recognize their work surveying for radioactive particles and dioxin accumulations along the Columbia River banks from Kennewick to Astoria. The Survivor Pole was later donated to the Oregon Zoo by Greenpeace. In 2014 the pole was restored by Ray Losey and installed at the Oregon Zoo near the condor exhibit area. Sandy Davis, a long-time Riverkeeper activist based in Longview, is Ray's step-sister. She shared this story with us.



Share your stories and photos about the Columbia River with us by emailing info@columbiariverkeeper.org.

Give!Guide

Special thanks to The Willamette Week Give!Guide 2014 and our business supporters at Tofurky and eNRG Kayaking. This year 170 people gave nearly \$15,000 to Riverkeeper through Give!Guide. The folks at The Willamette Week are on a mission to foster community giving-back and philanthropy in young people. We are grateful to be included in this program that supports a diverse and deserving group of local non-profits.

This year, the first 60 people who gave \$50 to Columbia Riverkeeper through Give!Guide received Tofurky vouchers and their gifts were matched by Tofurky up to \$2,500. eNRG Kayaking once again donated kayak tours to everyone who contributed \$150 or more. The generosity and support of both of these companies helped us raise almost twice as much this year, and we are sure our supporters will enjoy the Tofurky and kayaking—possibly at the same time.



River Cleanup on the Klickitat

In November, Riverkeeper volunteers collected trash from the most popular fishing places on the lower Klickitat River. We collected 12 bags of garbage—**over 350 pounds!**



Kris Gann: River Protector

After eleven years of faithful service, Kris Gann stepped down from Columbia Riverkeeper's Board of Directors in December. Kris brought great energy, intelligence, and local knowledge to our Board. She is a real estate broker in the Columbia River Gorge, and because of her commitment to the environment and her clients, Kris has completed the Earth Advantage® Broker, GREEN, and Eco-Broker® certification programs. She is an avid sailor, stand-up paddle-boarder and photographer. We'll continue to see her at community events and on the Columbia. Thank you Kris Gann!



Staff Field Trip to Columbia City & Astoria

Columbia Riverkeeper's entire staff converged in Columbia and Clatsop counties for a field trip and listening sessions with local activists. We toured a salmon habitat restoration site and had the pleasure of hearing our members share stories about why they love the Columbia and work to protect it.



Protect Our River from Oil-By-Rail

Join Columbia Riverkeeper and our partners across the Northwest to send a strong message: Dirty oil is not welcome in our communities. In Vancouver, Washington, Governor Inslee will approve or deny the giant oil-by-rail terminal proposed by Tesoro Savage. Right now, Washington's Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) is conducting a review of the project's impacts and will make a recommendation to the Governor. Riverkeeper and allies will present evidence to EFSEC about the environmental, public safety, and economic harms of oil-by-rail. In 2015, EFSEC plans to release its Draft Environmental Impact Statement and hold public hearings. Riverkeeper will work with local activists to make sure the public has a strong voice. Stay tuned.

Support our work to protect and restore the Columbia River.

Make a donation today at: www.columbiariverkeeper.org/donate.

Clean Water Act-ion: STOPPING ILLEGAL POLLUTION

By Miles Johnson,
Clean Water Attorney

Photo by Russ Ricketts

People rely on the Columbia River for food, drinking water, and world-class recreation. Yet hundreds of pipes dump toxic pollution into the Columbia River and its tributaries every single day. When corporations use the Columbia as a dumping ground for toxic pollution, Riverkeeper turns to the Clean Water Act to protect the public's right to a clean and healthy river. Signed by President Nixon in 1972, the Clean Water Act is the foremost law protecting our rivers and waterways; it is consistently recognized as one of our nation's most successful, and most popular, pieces of environmental legislation.

The Clean Water Act empowers citizens to hold polluters accountable when government regulators sit on their hands. We utilize the Clean Water Act every day to reduce toxic pollution. Here's how it works: when Riverkeeper discovers illegal pollution, the Clean Water Act allows Riverkeeper to go to court to stop the pollution and penalize the polluter.

Hudson Riverkeeper pioneered this approach, with Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as its prosecuting attorney. This is a legacy and a responsibility that Columbia Riverkeeper takes very seriously.

When Riverkeeper enforces the Clean Water Act against a polluter, we seek two results. First, the illegal pollution must end. This can mean that the polluter agrees to eliminate the discharge altogether or installs a treatment system to reduce toxic pollution. Second, the polluter must pay a penalty for degrading our river, as required by the Clean Water Act. The idea is simple: penalties put a price tag on illegal pollution, creating an incentive to comply with the law. Money from penalties funds projects like habitat restoration, toxic pollution studies, and road removal in critical watersheds, to off-set the harm caused by a company's illegal pollution. Riverkeeper never receives penalty dollars from our enforcement actions, but we can get reimbursed for our attorney fees.

Here are just a few recent examples of Riverkeeper's Clean Water Act work:

- ▶ Cleaning up stormwater in Clark County, WA: After Rosemere Neighborhood Association, Riverkeeper, and allies prevailed in court, Clark County agreed to follow the law and reduce polluted runoff from new construction sites throughout the County. The County also committed \$3 million for grants to protect and restore salmon habitat in Clark County rivers and streams harmed by stormwater pollution. This is one of the largest penalties ever in the Pacific Northwest and will benefit salmon for years to come.
- ▶ Reducing oil pollution from Columbia River dams: In a settlement with Columbia Riverkeeper that the Wall Street Journal called “groundbreaking,” the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers agreed to reduce oil pollution from dams. The Corps also agreed, for the first time, to disclose how much oil it spills, and to use biodegradable lubricants instead of petroleum products whenever feasible.
- ▶ Protecting the Columbia Slough: The Columbia Slough, in north Portland, is degraded by polluted industrial runoff. The Slough is an important urban waterway where many Portlanders fish and recreate. Columbia Riverkeeper brought several Clean Water Act enforcement actions in 2013 and 2014 to clean up polluted runoff entering the Columbia Slough and send a strong message that industry cannot continue to send toxic runoff into the Slough.
- ▶ Preventing coal-dust pollution: Every day, open-topped coal trains travel through the Columbia Gorge where the railroad tracks hug the river. Riverkeeper patrols the river, and found that toxic coal blows off or falls from these trains into the water. Partnering with the Sierra Club and other allies, Columbia Riverkeeper has a pending Clean Water Act case to stop toxic coal from fouling our rivers. This is a first-of-its-kind case to address pollution from trains.



Riverkeeper's Clean
Water Attorney,
Miles Johnson



Industrial area in Vancouver, Washington

Ten Years of Troubled Waters for Oregon LNG

By Dan Serres,
Conservation Director

If you were an out-of-state energy speculator looking for a place to build a liquified natural gas (LNG) terminal in 2004, Warrenton, Oregon, seemed like a good choice. A company calling itself Skipanon Natural Gas and its parent corporation, Calpine, expected to find a complacent, pliable community that would succumb to a massive LNG terminal near the mouth of the Columbia River. Were they ever wrong.

For the last 10 years, the estuary residents joined by people across the region, have battled to protect our river from LNG. The fight is not over because the gas speculators, now called Oregon LNG, want to increase fracking and send the gas to Asia.



The East Skipanon River Peninsula is the subject of a property dispute between Oregon LNG and the U.S Army Corps of Engineers. Photo by Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky.



A happy, hard-earned anniversary – in November, Oregonians and Washingtonians came together to celebrate 10 years of an LNG-free Columbia River.

Commissioners, even though the company spent millions of dollars to pressure local landowners, elected officials, and stalwart defenders of the Columbia River Estuary into accepting Oregon LNG.

Oregon LNG's strategies have not worked. In fact, one industry analysis summarized Oregon LNG's history in an aptly titled article, "Oregon LNG Faces More Troubled Waters Locally," describing the proposal as "plagued" by local opposition.

10 Years of Resistance

In mid-November, 2014, dozens of long-time activists gathered in Astoria to celebrate and remember the hard work, creativity, and humor that help keep the

The last 10 years have not been kind to Oregon LNG. The gas company went bankrupt, changed names, modified the pipeline route to avoid the Willamette Valley, and even switched from planning to import gas (remember the "we are running out of gas" scare tactics?) to planning to export gas. In addition, Oregon LNG has faced a criminal investigation by the Oregon Attorney General and a 5-0 rejection by the Clatsop County Board of

"I support the effort to keep the Columbia River free of LNG because the planet and all the people on it deserve better."

- Laurie Caplan, Astoria resident and activist with Columbia Pacific Common Sense

Columbia River LNG-free. Beginning with the efforts of Rivervision and People for Responsible Prosperity in 2005 that spearheaded early efforts to stop the LNG industry, Oregonians and Washingtonians have relentlessly opposed Oregon LNG's plans and supported Riverkeeper's work to protect the Columbia from LNG development.

The work to stop LNG spans both sides of the River. From early 2005 through today, residents of Puget Island in Wahkiakum County teamed up with Clatsop and Cowlitz County LNG opponents to create a bi-state coalition. And, threatened by LNG-related pipeline proposals crossing farms, forests, and rivers in six Oregon counties and the Mt. Hood National Forest, thousands of Northwest residents joined the fight. Together, we successfully stopped the Bradwood LNG terminal and the Palomar Pipeline, and we will protect our region from Oregon LNG as well.

Today, Oregon LNG's Troubles Mount

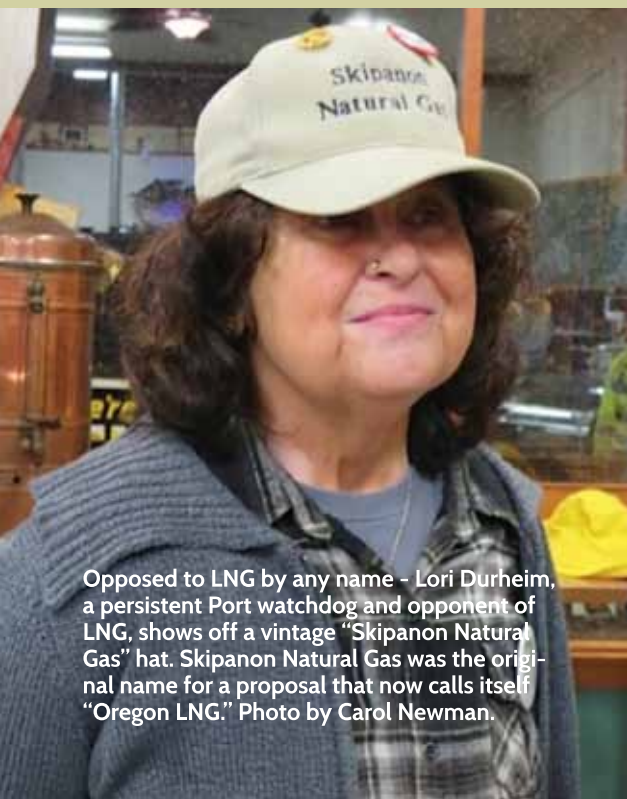
In late 2014, two major developments changed the

landscape for Oregon LNG yet again—and not for the better. First, the Oregon State Court of Appeals upheld the process by which the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners unanimously voted to deny land use approvals for Oregon LNG's pipeline. The Appeals Court ruled that, contrary to Oregon LNG's claims, the commissioners had not demonstrated any unacceptable bias when they rejected Oregon LNG's application to build a pipeline through sensitive streams, farms, and forests in Clatsop County. The Court's decision brings closer the final resolution of the County's rejection of Oregon LNG.

Meanwhile, a second huge obstacle emerged for Oregon LNG—a property dispute at the proposed terminal site. In a surprising move, Oregon LNG is suing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in federal court because the Corps holds an easement to dispose of dredge spoils where Oregon LNG wants to build its terminal. As Riverkeeper's director Brett VandenHeuvel explained to the *Daily Astorian*, "It's simple, you cannot build a

"LNG terminals and pipelines take us in the opposite direction of where our society needs to go. Building more fossil fuel infrastructure designed to profit from speculation and scarcity threatens our economy, our transition to a sustainable society powered by renewable resources, and degrades our forests, farms, rivers, fisheries, and quality of life. LNG is emblematic of exploitation, speculation, and crony capitalism. We can do better than let the Columbia River and the Pacific Northwest become a colony for fracked gas and oil."

- Paul Sansone, a Gales Creek nursery owner and former energy executive whose property was targeted for the Oregon LNG pipeline



Opposed to LNG by any name - Lori Durheim, a persistent Port watchdog and opponent of LNG, shows off a vintage "Skipanon Natural Gas" hat. Skipanon Natural Gas was the original name for a proposal that now calls itself "Oregon LNG." Photo by Carol Newman.

massive LNG terminal where the federal government has an easement to deposit dredge spoils. In addition, siting a massive LNG terminal in the heart of the Columbia River's most productive salmon fishery is a huge mistake."

Currently, hundreds of salmon fishermen, sailors, and commercial fishermen keep boats in popular marinas on the Skipanon River where Oregon LNG hopes to build. In 2015, Riverkeeper and our allies are urging the Army Corps and the State of Oregon to protect these users and the salmon that rely on the Columbia River Estuary.

We Need Your Help to Slam the Door on Oregon LNG

Despite its lack of progress in recent years, Oregon LNG persists with plans to dredge a massive hole in critical salmon habitat in the Columbia River and clear-cut a swath through Oregon's Coast Range to establish the West Coast's only LNG export terminal. Oregon Governor Kitzhaber and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) need to hear from each of us, so please take a moment to call the Governor's office at 503-378-4582 and send a letter to the Governor and DEQ by going to our website, bit.ly/no_LNG.



Hanford Cleanup: 2014 in Review

A Challenging Year for the Department of Energy

By Abigail Cermak, *Hanford Coordinator*

Each year, the U.S. Department of Energy (Energy) looks back at the previous year of Hanford cleanup. Energy's retrospectives highlight Hanford cleanup victories, showcase milestones reached, and celebrate other accomplishments from 2014. Energy was particularly enthusiastic about the designation of Hanford's B Reactor as a national park because of its historical significance. Likewise, Energy rightly noted that groundwater cleanup is progressing on the Hanford site, and many polluted areas have been remediated. The years of public demand for groundwater cleanup is showing results. And credit is due to the workers that risk their health to correct the unintended consequences of our past actions. But while these accomplishments deserve recognition, they should not mask the serious setbacks and failures for Hanford cleanup in 2014. Unfortunately, Energy's unbalanced perspective of its own work ignores missed deadlines, worker safety concerns, and public opposition to inadequate cleanup proposals in 2014, all which will require continued oversight by the public in the years to come.

Missed Deadlines, Fines, and More

Riverkeeper has consistently advocated that Energy take cleanup approaches to protect the Columbia River, and recent decisions have prompted Riverkeeper to question Energy's methods. We are not alone. Within the past year, Energy's actions, or lack thereof, have come under fire from Columbia Basin tribes, watchdog organizations, and workers, as well as the State of Washington, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Government Accountability Office.

In October, EPA announced it will begin to issue weekly fines of up to \$10,000 for Energy's failure to clean up the K-Basins on schedule. The K-Basins are located along the Columbia River and once stored spent nuclear fuel from plutonium production. Over time, the fuel rods began to decay leaving a layer of highly radioactive sludge at the bottom of the basins. Although Energy removed 2,300 tons of spent nuclear fuel to dry storage, the sludge still remains in the K West Basin, threatening the Columbia River. The original date for sludge removal was 2002 but that deadline has repeatedly been extended, with no end in sight. While Riverkeeper supports EPA's fines, federal regulators must do more to prevent Energy from dragging its feet in addressing this dangerous radioactive sludge near the Columbia River.

Also in October, the Yakama Nation issued a notice of intent to sue Energy and the EPA because the 300 Area Cleanup Plan does not protect human health or the environment. The 300 Area, also located in the River Corridor, housed uranium fuel fabrication and radiological research facilities. During operation, solid wastes were buried and toxic liquid wastes were discharged into the soil, leaving the groundwater contaminated with uranium, tritium, nitrate, and trichloroethene. A cleanup plan for this area, approved in December 2013, proposed leaving much of the contamination in the soil and the groundwater. Several stakeholders, including Riverkeeper and the Hanford Advisory Board (of which Riverkeeper is a member), submitted public comments demanding a more aggressive cleanup approach that would protect the Columbia River and provide for future unrestricted use in this area.

Following Energy's controversial 300 Area decision, Riverkeeper and the Hanford Advisory Board criticized Energy for deciding to leave pollution in soils in the 100-F Area, along the Columbia River. Plutonium production at the F-reactor left the soil and groundwater contaminated with radioactive and chemical wastes like strontium and chromium, which are currently entering the Columbia River. Energy's 100-F Cleanup Plan, similar to the 300 Area Plan, proposes leaving contamination to naturally degrade for the next 150 to 264 years. Columbia Riverkeeper and others disagreed with Energy's decision, regarding it as a do-nothing approach that could negatively impact the Columbia River. Taken together, the 300 Area and the 100-F Area decisions set a bad precedent for cleanup: Energy is deciding to leave dangerous pollution close to the Columbia River rather than proactively remove the contamination.

Energy's approach to worker safety also drew criticism in November. The Washington State Attorney General took the extraordinary step of filing a lawsuit against Energy and its contractors for exposing workers to harmful vapors from waste tanks. Located in Hanford's Central Plateau area, 177 tanks containing over 56 million gallons of radioactive waste must be continually monitored for chemical and temperature stability. In the past year, over 50 workers who monitor the tanks have received treatment for breathing chemical vapors from the tanks. While safety has been an issue for decades, worker safety measures have failed to provide adequate protection for those on the front lines of Hanford cleanup. That same week, a coalition of groups including Hanford Challenge,

Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the United Association Local 598 filed a separate lawsuit against Energy regarding worker safety.

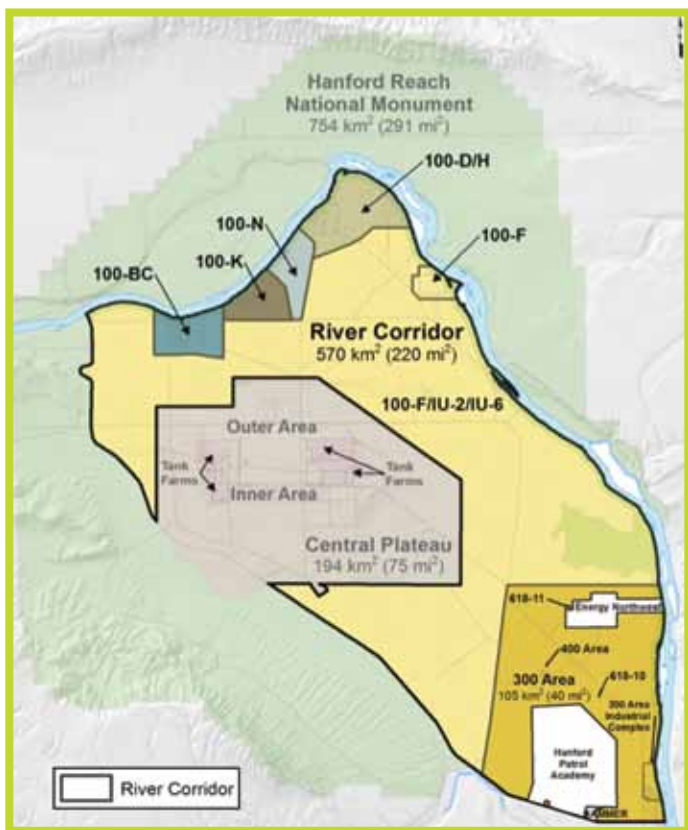
And finally in December, the Government Accountability Office released a report showing that the Hanford waste tanks are in worse condition than previously thought, filling with water and making it difficult to detect leaks. This news is cause for alarm for several reasons: one of the newer double-shelled tanks is already leaking; the Waste Treatment Plant, designed to turn the tank waste into glass for long-term storage, is behind schedule; and waste from known single-shelled leaking tanks has already contaminated groundwater that is moving toward the Columbia River. Though Riverkeeper has repeatedly called on Energy to take concrete steps towards building new tanks, Energy has not committed to build more tanks.

Energy is Cutting Corners on Hanford Cleanup

In contrast to Energy's rosy view of cleanup progress in 2014, Energy is taking shortcuts with cleanup, and the response from the public is getting louder. From ignoring worker safety issues, to missing deadlines, to proposing weak cleanup plans, Energy is putting the health of our river, Hanford workers, and our communities at risk. So while Energy accomplished some of its goals in 2014, it also fell short in ways that will make cleanup even more challenging in 2015 and beyond. From Riverkeeper's perspective, Energy is walking away from its pollution and failing to provide cleanup solutions that will protect Hanford workers, honor future generations, and ensure that Hanford's nuclear and chemical wastes will not harm the Columbia River.

2015 New Year's Resolution for Hanford Cleanup

While Hanford may seem out-of-sight-out-of-mind for some people, Hanford is a regional problem, and many of us live downstream. There is no imaginary line where Hanford toxic waste stops on the Columbia River. This year Riverkeeper will continue to fight for clean water, advocate for faster and more effective cleanup strategies, empower citizens by providing more opportunities to participate in Hanford cleanup decisions, and educate the next generation with our Hanford & the River high school science curriculum. You too can help by standing with Columbia Riverkeeper in 2015 and urging Energy to protect human health and our natural resources for future generations. Make your voice heard; it's time we all speak up for Hanford cleanup! ♦

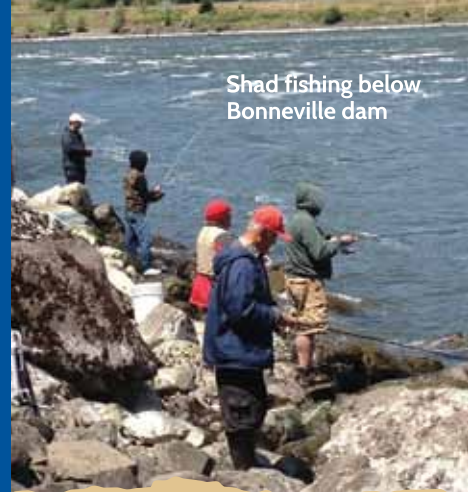


This product was funded through a grant from the Washington Department of Ecology. While these materials were reviewed for grant consistency, this does not necessarily constitute endorsement by the Department.



Carp for dinner near Vancouver, WA

Is your fish TOXIC? PROJECT



Shad fishing below Bonneville dam

By Lorri Epstein, Water Quality Director

"I teach my nephew not to waste. We eat everything, even the eyeballs. And he loves the way the tail fries up like a potato chip." This resourceful lesson in reducing food waste may actually be a health risk when the water is polluted. The quote is by a woman who approached me after I finished a talk about the alarming levels of toxics that Riverkeeper found in some Columbia River fish. Just the day before, her brother had caught a walleye in the Columbia, and she fried the fish whole in her family's traditional Samoan style. She was alarmed and concerned by the information I'd just shared.

In the second year of our "Is Your Fish Toxic?" project, Riverkeeper met fishermen and tested fish bound for the dinner table, including a shad caught near Bonneville Dam, a carp caught near Vancouver, and a walleye caught in Portland. The results showed that some Columbia River fish contain arsenic, mercury, and PCB levels exceeding what the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers safe for human consumption. Riverkeeper also detected heavy metals, such as chromium, and toxic flame retardants (poly-brominated diphenyl ethers, or PBDEs), which can increase the risk of cancer and harm hormone function. Specifically, a Columbia River walleye (the same species that the woman at my talk had fed her family) contained PCBs 175 times the EPA limit for unrestricted consumption. The alarming levels of contaminants that Riverkeeper found in these fish raise health concerns for people who commonly eat resident fish like bass, walleye, catfish, or carp.

Through interviews with fishers, Riverkeeper found that people of ethnic, immigrant, and low income populations are eating fish with unsafe levels of toxic pollution. They may face greater risk because they eat fish often, and may prepare their catch in ways that increase their exposure to contamination. For example, the family of a Cambodian-American fisherman who provided shad for Riverkeeper's study cooks the whole fish in soups and stews. Not removing the internal organs, skin, head, and tail retains nutrients and flavor, but also increases exposure to toxic contaminants that

concentrate in these parts of the fish's body. Another fisherman from Kyrgyzstan eats carp twice a week, while the EPA recommends limiting consumption to less than one meal per month based on the PCB levels found in his fish.

Key findings:

- Walleye from the Multnomah Channel contained PCBs 175 times the EPA safe levels.
- Carp near Vancouver, Washington, contained PCBs 30 times the EPA safe levels, mercury 3.5 times the EPA limit, as well as flame retardants and other heavy metals.
- Steelhead and shad, which spend part of their lives in the ocean, did not contain detectable PCBs but did test positive for flame retardants and contained elevated levels of mercury.

The fact that some Columbia River fish are unsafe to feed to your family presents a real environmental justice issue. Posting warning signs is not the answer. Many people are unaware of the warnings or continue to eat fish for cultural or economic reasons. The top priority must be cleaning up our rivers. Efforts to reduce and prevent Columbia River contamination are vital to protecting the health of all Columbia River communities. Fish advisories unjustly shift the burden of environmental contamination from polluters to families who face the risks of toxic exposure in their food. ❖

Follow these tips to reduce your exposure to PCBs:

- ▶ Throw away internal organs, skin, head and tail.
- ▶ Remove all skin.
- ▶ Cut away the dark fat on top of fish along its backbone.
- ▶ Slice off the fat belly meat along the bottom of the fish.
- ▶ Cut away the dark, V-shaped wedge of fat located along the lateral line on each side of the fish.
- ▶ Do not eat raw fish.
- ▶ Bake or broil skinned, trimmed fish on rack or grill so fat drips off & discard trimmings.
- ▶ Thoroughly clean and trim fish if making stew or soup.

Courtesy of Oregon Health Authority

Member Profile:

Paul Sansone & Susan Vosburg

Paul Sansone and Susan Vosburg are important leaders in their community. And they support Columbia Riverkeeper. We met Paul and Sue when Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) pipelines threatened their property and their neighbors' farms in Gales Creek, Oregon. Recognizing that LNG would be harmful to their valley and bad for Oregon, Paul and Sue jumped in to help create Oregon Citizens Against the Pipelines.

In addition to being local leaders, Paul and Sue are pioneering biodynamic and organic farmers who co-founded the first USDA Organic Certified nursery in the United States. Paul also worked on solar and renewable energy projects in Australia, China, South America, and North America. Sue has worked as a Licensed Tax Consultant for her accounting business, Forest Grove Tax Service, since 1977. Paul and Sue planted their 32-acre property in Gales Creek with indigenous timber seedlings in 2007. With their deep understanding of the energy industry, renewables, farming, forestry, property rights, and business, the LNG companies picked on the wrong people.

In 2006, Paul and Sue met Riverkeeper's former director, Brent Foster, at town-hall meeting about the threat of newly proposed LNG pipelines. Columbia Riverkeeper, Paul said, was "very supportive and helped the farmers, foresters, and vineyard owners to organize and protect their interests, the environment, and the Columbia River." Paul and Sue were also impressed by Riverkeeper's ability to see the broader implications of proposals impacting the Columbia River.

Riverkeeper partnered with the newly-formed Oregon Citizens Against the Pipelines and connected farmers with the estuary communities threatened by LNG. "It is not often that you can find private property rights activists working with environmentalists, and farmers and foresters working with suburbanites — all unified by opposition to energy speculators taking our land, river, and democracy," Paul stated.



When asked why they support Riverkeeper, Paul said the decision is easy. "Columbia Riverkeeper is a precious community resource. Sue and I can personally attest to the incredible impact of this small, community-based organization." ❖

Hitting the Ground Running

by Acasia Berry, Development Director

Thank you for your overwhelming support of clean water. On October 1, 2014, we set a goal to raise \$100,000 by the end of the year. With your generosity, we exceeded our goal and raised a record **\$135,000!**

You are protecting the Columbia and our communities. You are buying water quality sampling equipment and funding our river patrols. Because 2015 is going to be a critical year to prevent dirty fossil fuel export, you are supporting community organizing, legal work, and creative youth engagement. We had to hit the ground running in 2015, and you responded.

We are grateful to stand with each of you for clean water and a sustainable future. Thank you.

River Interview: Dave Densmore

By Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky,
Community Organizer

Poem by Dave Densmore: **THE LOGBOOK**

There's a coffee stained old logbook,
Up on the shelf at home.
It's terse and to the point,
Unlike the stories in my poems.

As I slowly turn the pages,
Countless stories within unfold.
From flat calm and sunny,
To battling wind and cold.

'Southwest sixty, and jogging',
Doesn't tell the beating that you take.
The strength of faith that you have to have,
Or the money that you won't make.

'Broke down, waiting for parts',
Says nothing of the frustration of laying in port.
You know it's meaningless at the bank,
If your payment comes up short.

'Gusting seventy, drug anchor twice',
No details of a long hard night.
No sleep, no rest, while hanging on,
In some little wind-swept bight.

By the same token, 'fair weather, good fishing',
Speaks volumes to those in the know.
Those four words, describe heaven on earth,
To those of us who go.

And, 'plugged full, and running in',
May seem trivial and trite,
But it speaks of men successful and proud,
When all in their world is right.

Well, I guess it does speak volumes,
Though they're not scrawled on the page to see.
Hell, even those old coffee stains,
Bring stories back to me!

But, you won't read about the special smells,
When a boat cook struts his stuff.
Or the beauty of sea life, sunrises and sets,
Seems I can never get enough.

As I thumb through it, there by the fire,
I handle that book with care.
So many chapters of my life,
Are written down in there.

That old book is next to my bible,
In it's place up on the shelf.
Between its covers I guess I find,
The definition of myself.



Full-time fisherman. Full-time poet. Both describe Dave Densmore. Long time friend of Columbia Riverkeeper as well. I caught up with Dave one afternoon to talk about fishing, poetry, and the changing landscape of the Columbia River. I called during a rare moment of downtime, when a December downpour put an early end to his day of boat repairs. “I got a Christmas tree for the boat instead,” he told me.

I asked Dave whether certain circumstances (like a landless sunrise or record-setting catch) spark his creative writing. “When they decide to come, they come. My poem, Fish N’ Poems, talks about how sometimes it’ll be in the middle of the night, sometimes it’ll be a beautiful day and sometimes it’ll be blowing and storming and I’ll have my hands full on the gear and taking care of business. But, a poem comes and I have no choice but to run down and get a piece of paper and write it down before the paper dissolves in my hand.”

I pressed him for harrowing details about foregoing safety to guarantee a poem makes it onto paper. He laughed and reminded me, “I’ve been doing the boating and the fishing for so long it’s automatic.” Life on a fishing boat has become second nature. “At night I can just listen for a second, feel the way the boat feels, smell the air, and then be back asleep, knowing that

things are alright and be hardly unaware of servicing.” Raised in a small fishing village in the Aleutian Islands, Dave bought his first commercial fishing boat at thirteen.

With more than half a century as a commercial fisherman, plus family roots in the business, Dave has hard-earned wisdom and perspective. “I have harvested millions of pounds of fish in my life, and I hope to harvest more. I’ll tell you something. I have respect for the resource. Respect for the ones that are dying. I think that if fishermen start thinking about it as something different than a means for getting a lot of junk that we don’t need to exist then some of the problems would straighten themselves out. It’s about respect.”

Dave is a cornerstone poet at the annual Fisher Poets Gathering in Astoria. Commercial fishermen from across the nation descend on Astoria from February 27 to March 1, 2015, for a weekend of poetry, storytelling, and friendship. I asked Dave if he’s seen an uptick in the number of fisherman writing poetry since he started sharing his work. “Now it’s pretty common,” Dave said. “Quite a few fisherman are starting to write. And I think when they start writing about [fishing] they start seeing it different. It opens up the spirituality of this life.” ❖



SAVE THE
DATE



February 28

Fisher Poets Gathering in Astoria, Oregon

Columbia Riverkeeper will host a concert by Dave Densmore and singer-songwriter Alexa Wiley, on Saturday, February 28. For details go to fisherpoets.org.



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Sockeye Salmon
Photo by Russ Ricketts of River Snorkel