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Hanford Art Contest Announces Winners, Shifting the Narrative from “Nuclear Wasteland” to a Place Worth Embracing and Fighting For

July 29, 2020 (Richland, WA; Portland, Oregon)—The Hanford Nuclear Site is the most polluted place in the Western Hemisphere. The reality of cleaning up Hanford is daunting: as toxic pollution continually threatens to poison groundwater, soil, and the people and animals that rely on its important natural and cultural resources. To shift this narrative and inspire regional support for a thorough cleanup, Columbia Riverkeeper hosted the Hanford Art Contest in partnership with Yakama Nation’s Environmental Restoration Waste Management Program (ERWM). Artists were invited to create a piece that reclaims Hanford’s nuclear legacy through art. The winning entries share a common theme: Hanford is a place worth fighting for.

The popular narrative represents Hanford as a nuclear wasteland, a dangerous place that will take centuries to clean. In fact, Hanford encompasses a large area within culturally significant lands of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation), Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), Nez Perce Tribe, and the Wanapum people. The nuclear site and National Monument contain important Native American cultural resources—this area is one of the most culturally rich areas in the Columbia Plateau. Due to access restrictions since the mid-1940s, many resources remain intact. Hanford Nuclear Site and surrounding Hanford National Monument are also renowned for their biodiversity, the last free-flowing, undammed section of the Columbia River, the breathtaking White Bluffs, the best mainstem spawning for fall Chinook salmon, and so much more. The art contest challenges the popular narrative and explores Hanford through an artist’s lens.

Meet the Winners:



First Place: “An Impact on All”

Fourteen year old, Jazmine Cabaluna from Coquitlam British Columbia, Canada, won first place with her piece “An Impact on All.”

“I drew it because I wanted to depict the impact that dumping waste into a river can cause to an ecosystem and the animals living there,” says Cabaluna. “A healthy Columbia River means to me that those living there would live out healthy lives that should not be cut short because of dumped waste.”

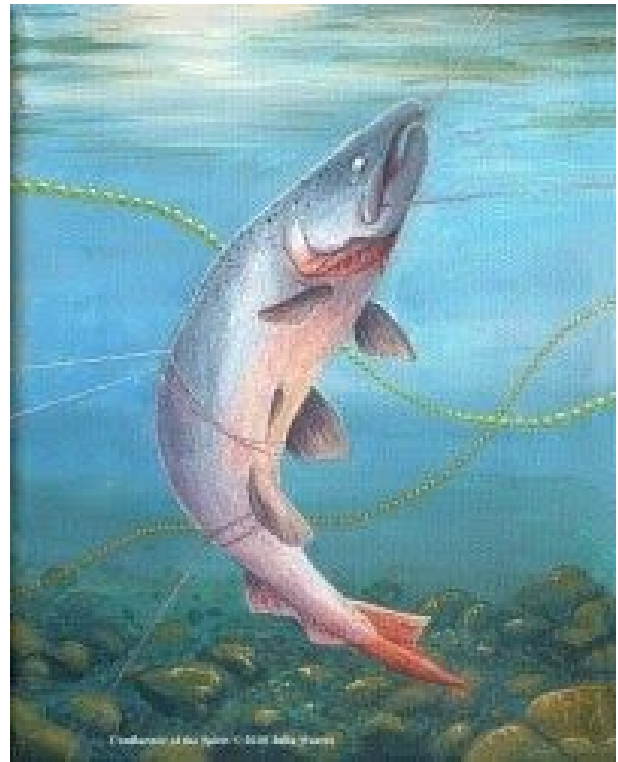
To hear more about the inspiration behind the artwork

and vision, Columbia Riverkeeper conducted an [interview with the inspiring young artist and activist.](#)

Second Place: “Confluence of the Spirit”

Julia Rose Waters, took second place in the contest with her acrylic painting, “Confluence of the Spirit.”

In describing her piece Waters writes, “The painting is of a salmon struggling against the bonds of fishing wire while dreamy but sickly-looking strings of pearls float behind it. Its empty eyes represent an inner sacredness and power, as if the god of fish himself is the one struggling.” Waters continues, “The outcome is not clear. Will it escape or be caught?” Hoping that her artwork speaks to the nature of activism, Waters elaborates, “The story of healthy rivers can't end well without the actions of people who care. The painting's title also references this, representing the human spirit's forked path: action or inaction.”



<https://www.etsy.com/shop/juliarosewaters>



Third Place: “Nuclear Wasted”

The third place winner for the Hanford art contest is David Joel Kitcher, with his abstract work, “Nuclear Wasted.” Kitcher, who was raised in North Richland, WA, explains that he has recently started creating art that expresses some of the experience of growing up next to Hanford.

djkitcher.com/

Winners were awarded with cash prizes and the opportunity to know that they are influencing generations of people to believe that Hanford – despite it being the most contaminated site in the Western Hemisphere – remains a place that inspires us to dream, create, and imagine a Columbia River free from the threat of Hanford’s nuclear legacy.

About [Columbia Riverkeeper](#)

Columbia Riverkeeper’s mission is to protect and restore the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean. Columbia Riverkeeper works with people in dozens of communities—rural and urban—with the same goals: protecting the health of their families and the places they love. Columbia Riverkeeper enforces environmental laws to stop illegal pollution, protects salmon habitat, and challenges harmful fossil fuel terminals. Columbia Riverkeeper is a member of Waterkeeper Alliance, the world’s fastest growing environmental movement, uniting more than 300 Waterkeeper organizations around the world.

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