

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 14, 2021

Acting Director Shalanda Young
Office of Management and Budget (OMB)
1650 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Young,

We are in receipt of 2019 and 2021 letters from the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yamaka Nation (Yakama Nation), Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), and Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requesting that Bradford Island, Oregon, be added to the National Priorities List (NPL). We write today in strong support of this request.

Bradford Island, located within the present-day federal Bonneville Dam complex on the Columbia River, has hosted tribal fisherpeople since time immemorial. It remains a traditional tribal fishing area for Native peoples in the area, notably the Yakama Nation.

Currently, Bradford Island is owned and managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) as part of the dam complex. The site is contaminated with toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) because from 1942 until 1982, the Corps used the site as a landfill and dumped electrical components and other debris in the river around the island. PCBs do not break down easily and can persist in the bodies of resident fish. The most recent sampling, from 2011, showed high concentrations of PCBs, particularly in smallmouth bass. This prompted the Oregon Health Authority and Washington State Department of Health to issue fish consumption advisories for this area. The contamination is particularly impactful for tribal fisherpeople who use the island for traditional fishing purposes.

For over two decades, the Corps has been responsible for evaluating and managing clean-up of this site, with technical consultation from the Yakama Nation, DEQ, Ecology, and others. The agency conducted clean-up activities in 2000, 2002, and 2007. However, since that time, and despite sampling evidence in 2011 showing high levels of contamination, the agency has advanced few and limited meaningful measures to remedy clear risks to public health and the environment. Decades after the original pollution occurred, tissue from resident fish caught at Bradford Island contain the highest levels of cancer-causing PCBs in the Pacific Northwest.

Meaningful remediation of this site is critical to mitigate health risks to people – particularly tribal communities, plants, and animals. Unfortunately, it seems that the Corps has been unable to prioritize strong and decisive action here. Additional oversight and engagement from EPA, through official listing on the National Priorities List, is critical to ensure that meaningful remedial action is taken.

If Bradford Island is listed on the NPL, we would look forward to working collaboratively with EPA and the Corps to address ongoing exposure risks and advance meaningful cleanup at the site. We strongly urge you to give your full and fair consideration to NPL listing to ensure that Bradford Island is cleaned up, resulting in a safe environment and healthy fish that are safe to eat.

Sincerely,



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress