

The Dipnetter

News of the River from the
Columbia River Inter-Tribal
Fish Commission

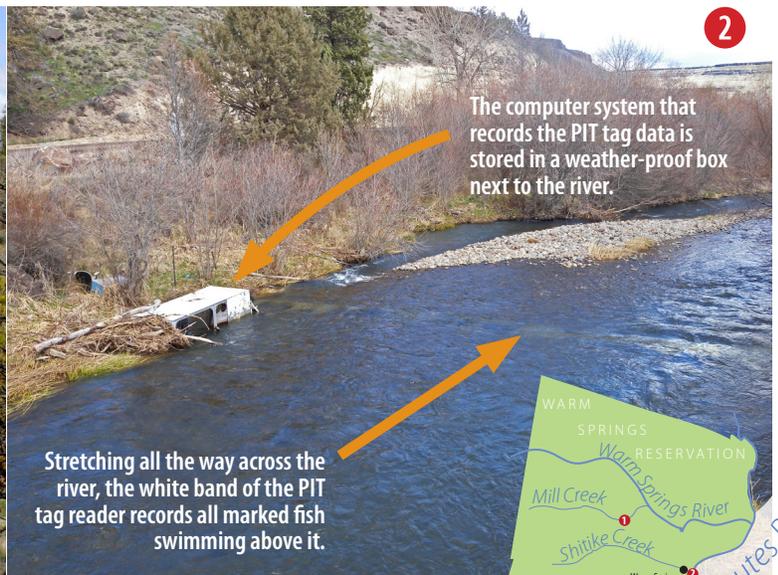
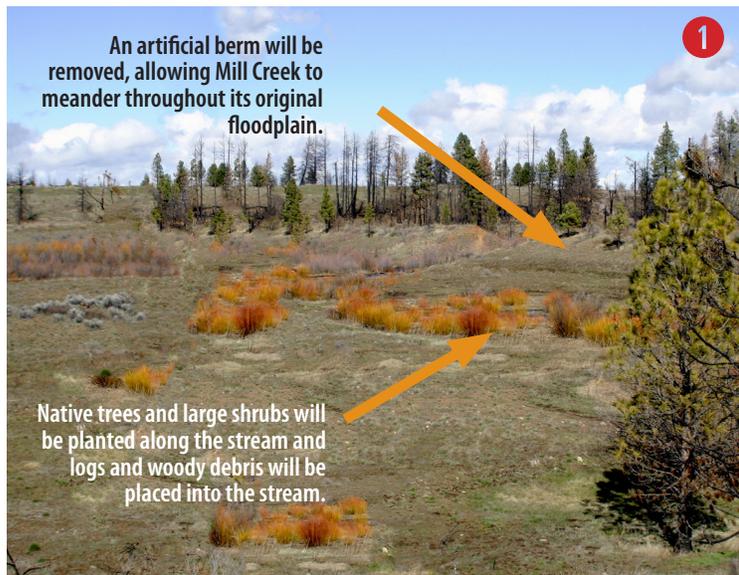


April 2014

WARM SPRINGS PROJECTS TOUR

The March CRITFC commission meeting was hosted by the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon. At these semiannual on-site meetings, commissioners from all four member tribes and CRITFC staff are given the opportunity to visit restoration sites, fishery facilities, or other locations that can give valuable, firsthand exposure to projects. The first site the group toured

was the Mill Creek restoration site **1**. This project, funded by the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund, will restore the stream to a more natural and salmon-friendly state. The second location visited was a PIT tag reading system that stretches the entire width of Shitike Creek **2** just downstream from Warm Springs. 🐟

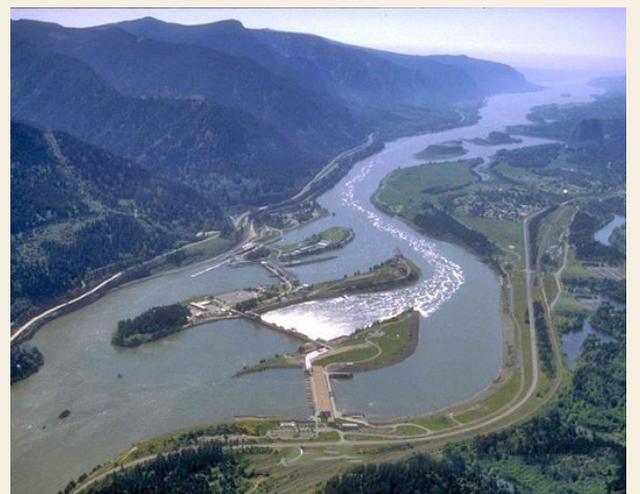


BELOW BONNEVILLE FISHERY

STUART ELLIS, CRITFC HARVEST BIOLOGIST

The tribes have not yet made any decisions to open a tribal bank hook-and-line fishery downstream of Bonneville. Last year the short opening downstream of Bonneville caught over 47% of the total tribal spring chinook harvest. The potential of high catches downstream of Bonneville are a concern to tribal leaders who want to balance fishing in Zone 6 with any fishing that occurs downstream. If the tribes do decide to open fisheries downstream of Bonneville, there could be some restrictions to try to limit the catch. Tribal members are encouraged to contact their own tribe's fishery department for information specific to them. 🐟

photo by BPA



SEA LION UPDATE

DOUG HATCH, CRITFC SENIOR BIOLOGIST

So far this year, sea lion activity in the Bonneville Dam tailrace is down compared to previous years. This early in the season, the sea lions' primary prey is sturgeon. Their catch so far this year is the lowest it's been in the past eight years.

CRITFC began the boat-based hazing in the tailrace area on March 10. This effort will continue through mid-May. The point of the hazing is to push sea lions away from the dam where fish concentrate. Oregon and Washington fish and wildlife agencies will be responsible for trapping and removing animals in the Bonneville tailrace.

CRITFC will be conducting surveys in the lower river on a weekly basis to estimate the total number of sea lions in the Columbia River. On March 18, our crews estimated around 300 sea lions in the lower river, mostly downstream of the Cowlitz River. An additional 600 sea lions were located in the East Mooring Basin in Astoria. These animals likely came into the river following the smelt run.

There are at least four sea lions that have taken up residency in the Bonneville pool. The states will set two portable traps above Bonneville Dam in an effort to remove them. CRITFC will be observing these sea lions' behavior, including haul out sites, predation, and usual range routes to assist in determining the best trap placement locations.

If you see a sea lion while out on the river in Zone 6, please contact CRITFC Enforcement: (800) 487-3474 or (541) 386-6363 or CRITFC's Doug Hatch: (503) 238-0667. 🐟

WANAPUM DAM CRACK

TOM SKILES, CRITFC FISH PASSAGE SCIENTIST

On February 27, 2014 a 65-foot fracture was discovered on the upstream side of Wanapum Dam's fourth spillway pier. The fracture was originally two inches wide but was reduced to about one inch after the reservoir was drawn down 30 feet. This new level is below the required minimum operating pool. The cause of the fracture is still under investigation and is unknown.

The reservoir may remain at this lowered level until the crack is repaired. As a result, the fish ladder exits are stranded above the current water level. Grant and Chelan County PUDs have developed emergency fish passage plans to pass fish over the crippled Wanapum Dam and its upstream neighbor, Rock Island Dam, which is also affected by the Wanapum reservoir draw-down. This has created a situation where Wanapum Dam's fish ladder exits are high and dry, while Rock Island Dam's fish ladder entrances are high and dry.

CRITFC contacted NOAA to discuss how the lower pool range will affect juvenile passage. Wanapum relies primarily on a Surface Bypass Chute to pass juveniles. The reduced level will still provide some passage, but it is unlikely that it will be nearly as effective and the number of juveniles using it will be significantly less. The turbines at Wanapum were recently redesigned and the new turbines are safer for fish. However, they have never been tested at this low of a water level. Due to lower pool elevations at Wanapum the amount of water that can be passed though the powerhouse will be reduced by about 50%. The excess water will be spilled. Staff is working with NOAA to ensure that the spill patterns set up the best conditions for migrating juveniles. 🐟

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Tribal and First Nation representatives from the United States and Canada kicked-off a regional conversation about restoring fish passage to historical locations throughout the Columbia River Basin with a tour of Grand Coulee Dam. This 550-foot high dam was completed in 1942 and was constructed without fish passage.

Because it lacked fish passage, all the dams later built upstream from it had no reason to include fish passage, either. The tribes are advocating for adding fish passage to all the Columbia River dams to allow the eventual return of salmon throughout their historical range.

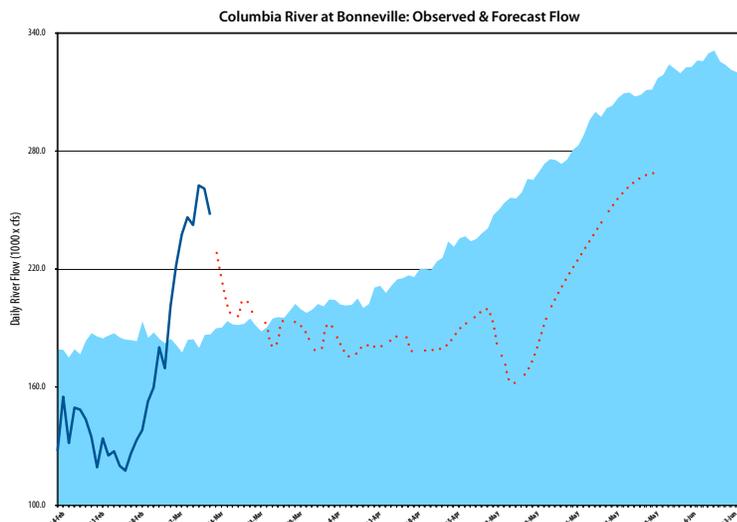


2014 RIVER FORECAST

KYLE DITTMER, CRITFC METEOROLOGIST/HYDROLOGIST

The annual spring snow pack melt is called a *freshet*. Freshets help flush salmon smolts downriver quickly, but also make it dangerous for fishers out on the water and along banks. CRITFC monitors river conditions throughout the year and works to predict when and how large the freshet will be. This year, river flow is predicted to increase in early May, reach its peak (flow will be fastest) in early June, and then slowly recede through the end of June. The size and timing will be near normal, making it favorable for both juvenile and adult migrating salmon. Models predict river flow will be 103% of normal.

Columbia Basin weather conditions have been very dry since last June. The normal moist air flow returned on Feb. 6 with a big snow storm. This helped catch up low snow packs throughout the region. The greatest improvements were in the Washington Cascades (90-110% of normal) and north Idaho (90-175% of normal). The



The dark blue line is the actual river flow observed so far this year. The red dotted line is the predicted river flow. The light blue area is the 10-year river flow average.

Oregon Cascades (25-75% of normal) and central Oregon are troublingly low. 🐟

MARIJUANA REMAINS ILLEGAL ON FISHING ACCESS SITES

MITCH HICKS, CRITFC ENFORCEMENT CHIEF

Neither Oregon's medical marijuana law nor Washington's recent marijuana legalization extends to federal lands in these states. The possession and use of marijuana on land or property owned by the federal government remains illegal. This includes the Zone 6 In-lieu and Treaty Fishing Access Sites, Celilo Village, and Corps of Engineers properties.

CRITFC Enforcement provides law enforcement at the fishing access sites and Celilo Village. They are

required to enforce all applicable tribal and federal rules, regulations, and laws. Additionally, at a CRITFC Special Law Enforcement Committee meeting in March, Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce tribal government representatives reaffirmed a zero tolerance directive to CRITFC Enforcement in regards to illegal drugs, including marijuana. Possession, use, distribution, or manufacturing of marijuana or any other illegal drug on fishing access sites can result in citation and conviction. 🐟

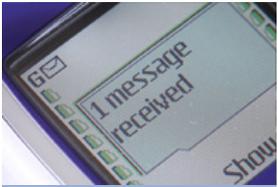




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Yakama • Warm Springs
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CRITFC Executive Director's Message

Calling the Salmon Home to the Upper Columbia

On March 18-20, over 100 tribal, state, and federal leaders and staff members met at the Kalispel Tribe's Northern Quest Hotel to discuss technical, cultural, social, institutional, and economic issues associated with restoring adult and juvenile fish passage to historical locations. The workshop was in preparation for the Future of Our Salmon Conference on April 23-24.

One of the workshop highlights for me was the cultural session. Topics ranged from the role of salmon in tribal cultures to the importance of restoring the land that supports us all. One speaker noted, "several Columbia River dams in Canada have legally binding agreements to add fish passage if Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph passage is ever added."

Many of the presentations dealt with the lack of fish passage at Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams, which blocks fish from returning to the Upper Columbia River. A Canadian First Nations leader told the attendees how, each

year, they conduct a ceremony that includes knocking rocks together in the river to call the salmon home and to let them know that his tribe will be waiting to greet them when they can one day return.

There were several technical presentations that convinced workshop attendees that fish passage is possible at any dam. The question is no longer "if" salmon passage can be restored. It is really a question of "when" salmon passage can be restored.

I hope to see chinook and sockeye return to the upper Columbia River in our lifetime, not only to restore fish runs throughout the basin, but so our brothers and sisters to the north can once again fish for salmon in their own waters. I have no doubt that the tribes and First Nations will be the primary leaders in making this happen. 🐟



Paul Lumley
YAKAMA

Bob P. 4-4