

# The Dipnetter

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



October 2013

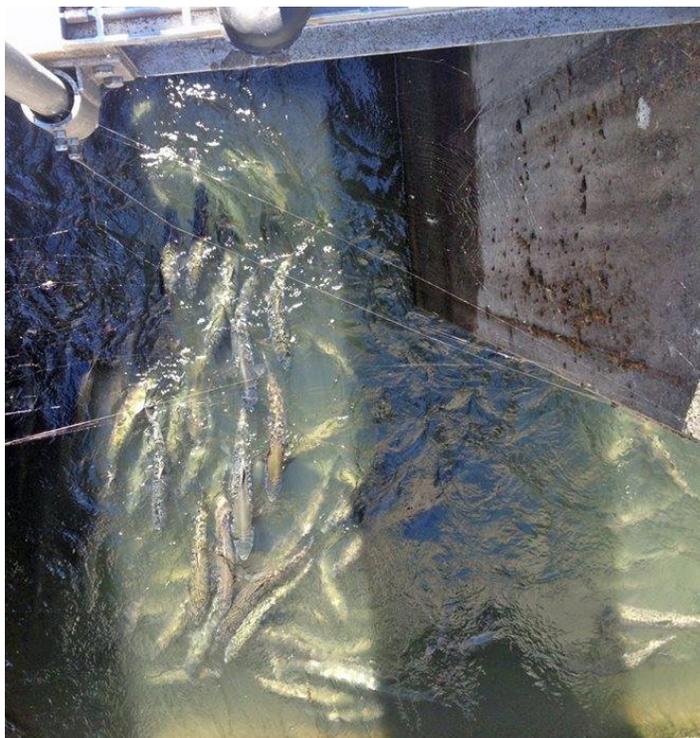
## RECORD FALL CHINOOK RUN

JEREMY FIVECROWS, CRITFC PUBLIC AFFAIRS

This year has been a record-breaking run for the fall chinook salmon. The run has broken both the single day and total run records. The first record broken was for the single day fall chinook passage at Bonneville Dam. On September 9, 63,870 chinook passed. This broke the record just set two days earlier of 48,710. The previous record was 45,884, set September 11, 2003.

The second record broken was for total fall chinook passage at Bonneville Dam. The record for total fall chinook passage over Bonneville Dam was broken on September 13, 2013 when 651,706 fall chinook had passed over the dam. Since the run is still in progress, this number will continue to grow. At press time (9/24/2013), the total count was 818,581 fish. This is the highest number of fall chinook passing the dam since its construction in 1938. The previous record of 610,736 fall chinook was set in 2003.

The records aren't only happening at Bonneville Dam, either. As the run makes its way upstream, it's breaking records along the way. Lower Granite Dam had its single day count broken on Sept. 20 when 4,387 fall chinook passed and its total fall chinook run record was broken on Sept. 18. At press time, the count was at 38,453. 🐟



*A crowd of salmon in the Bonneville Dam fish ladder on September 11, 2013.*

## FALL FISHERY

ELLIS, CRITFC HARVEST BIOLOGIST

What a fall season! We are having a record upriver fall chinook return this year. Currently we are expecting just over 1 million upriver fall chinook to enter the Columbia River. Over 900,000 are expected to pass Bonneville Dam. Already more fall chinook have passed over Bonneville than any other year since dam construction. The tribal fisheries have been good. Through September 24, there has been six gillnet fishing periods. The run size of B steelhead is pretty low. As of September 24, the B steelhead impacts are well within limits. As long as the fishery continues to avoid steelhead, the tribal fall chinook fishery will remain open.

Through September 27, there will have been 24 days of gillnet fishing. This is the most gillnet fishing days for this time period for over 20 years. This year has produced the largest commercial fall chinook catch in Zone 6 since Bonneville Dam was built in 1938 with an anticipated harvest of over 225,000 fall chinook. Prices have been good for most of this fall. Fishers have done a good job checking their nets often and icing their fish. This really helps keep the quality of the catch at a very high level, which commands premium prices. 🐟

# MID-COLUMBIA FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORY

The Oregon Health Authority and Washington State Department of Health have issued two fish consumption advisories for RESIDENT FISH in the Columbia River due to high to moderate levels of mercury and PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls). This advisory is to limit people's exposure to these toxic substances that have been found in fish that live year-round in these stretches of the Columbia River. The advisory applies to **sturgeon, carp, bluegill, sucker, smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, yellow perch, crappie, walleye, and catfish**. **The advisory does not include migratory fish (salmon, steelhead, and lamprey). These are a healthy choice from the Columbia River.**

Babies, children, and women who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or are nursing should take extra effort to follow this advisory. The health effects on developing fetuses, babies, and small children of eating contaminated fish can include lifelong learning problems and cancer.

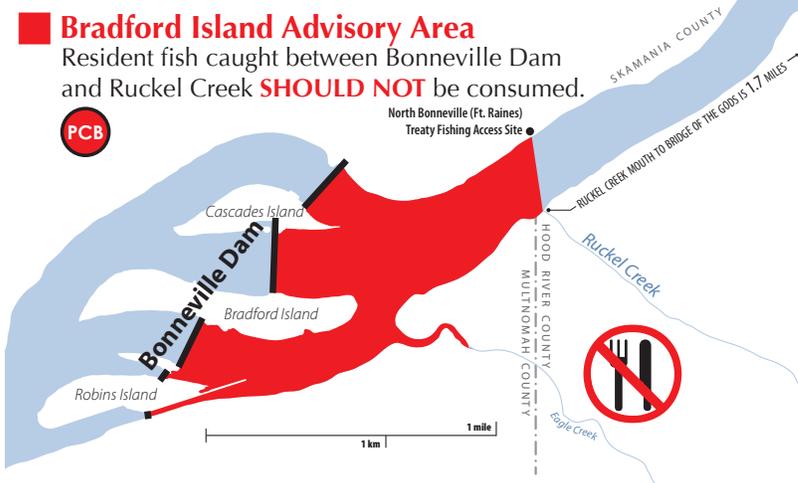
The tribes are well aware of the situation and have been working to address the cause, which is water pollution. The tribes believe that the long-term solution to this problem isn't keeping people from eating contaminated fish—it's keeping fish from being contaminated in the first place.

## Q: WHO IS AT RISK?

The people most susceptible to PCB and mercury health effects are small children, nursing babies, and pregnant women. Pregnant and nursing women should take extra effort to follow the advisory in order to protect their unborn fetuses or nursing children.

## Q: WHAT IS "ONE FISH MEAL"?

One "fish meal" is 8 oz. uncooked or about 6 oz. cooked for a 160 lb. adult, which is approximately the size of the palm of your hand. Add or subtract one ounce to the serving size for each 20 lb. difference in body weight. For example, the serving size for a 20 lb. child is just 1 oz.



## Q: WHAT ARE THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF CONSUMING MERCURY?

Mercury can harm the central nervous (brain) and immune systems. If a baby or fetus is exposed to high levels of mercury, the child may develop lifelong learning and behavioral problems. A fetus or child is more sensitive to mercury than an adult. If a person is exposed to mercury over time, it can harm organs including the kidneys and heart.

## Q: WHAT ARE THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF CONSUMING PCBs?

PCBs consumed at high levels can impact people of all ages. PCBs may cause a variety of health problems

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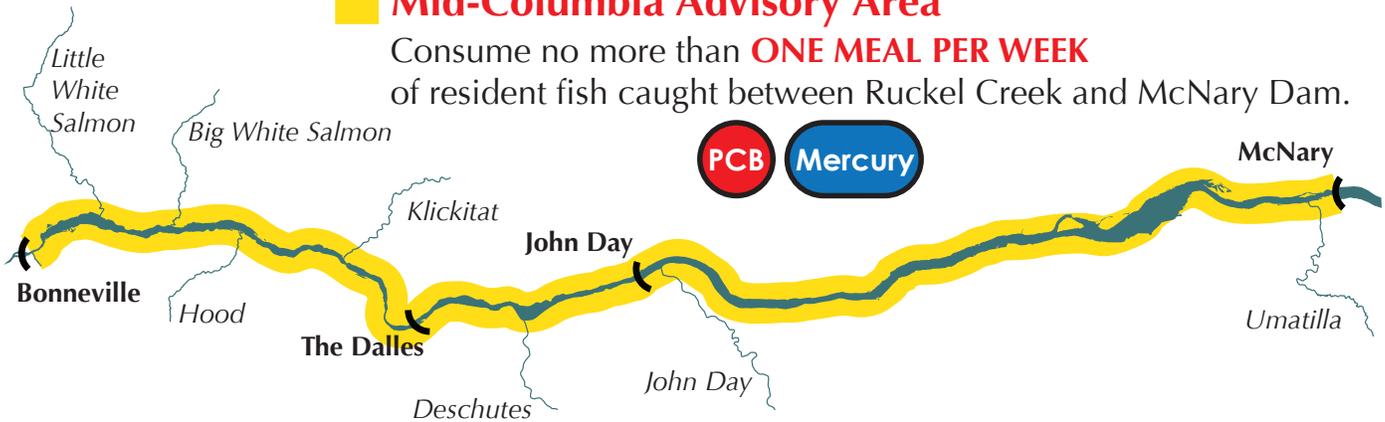


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## Mid-Columbia Advisory Area

Consume no more than **ONE MEAL PER WEEK**

of resident fish caught between Ruckel Creek and McNary Dam.



depending on the amount a person is exposed to. A baby or fetus exposed to high levels of PCBs may have lifelong learning and behavioral problems. PCBs may also affect the immune and reproductive systems, thyroid hormones, and cause cancer.

### Q: WHAT IS THE BASIS FOR THE ADVISORIES?

The joint fish consumption advisory for the middle section of the Columbia River is due to elevated levels of mercury and PCBs in fish tissue. Mercury contamination is the result of a number of sources but primarily coal-fired power plants, incinerators, and cement plants. The problem can be compounded by the hydroelectric system, where bacteria that thrive in low oxygen water like that found at the bottom of reservoirs can alter the mercury compound to a form that allows it to accumulate in fish tissue.

PCBs are long-lived pollutants that have entered the environment through use or improper disposal. The chemicals were widely used as insulating fluids for electric transformers, capacitors, and electric motors before being banned in 1979. The contamination around Bradford Island is the direct result of the Corps of Engineers' improper disposal of electrical equipment that was buried on the north end of Bradford Island.

### Q: HAVE TRIBAL STAFF REVIEWED THE FINDINGS AND THE ADVISORIES?

Yes, CRITFC water quality staff and tribal staff have reviewed the data and its findings and they appear to be sound.

### Q: WHAT ARE THE TRIBES DOING TO ADDRESS THIS?

Water quality needs to be made a priority for the Columbia Basin. The tribes worked successfully with Oregon to increase its fish consumption rate and water quality standards to reflect the higher amounts of fish tribal members eat compared to the general public. The tribes have also been working with Idaho and Washington to update their fish consumption rates and water quality standards so everyone is protected. Idaho and Washington should follow Oregon's lead with updated water quality standards that are more protective for tribal fishing communities. Armed with higher fish consumption rates and water quality standards, there will be a greater drive to remove these pollutants from the Columbia Basin. 🐟

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## UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS MEET AT CELILO

An historic meeting of United States Attorneys from throughout the country took place at Celilo Village on Sept. 18. The group consisted of the 2013 Attorney General's Advisory Council Native American Issues Subcommittee. Amanda Marshall, United States Attorney for the District of Oregon, was instrumental in bringing this group to the Columbia River.

At the meeting, former CRITFC Enforcement Chief Davis Washines was honored with a lifetime achievement award by the four United States Attorneys for the Oregon, Western Washington, Eastern Washington, and Idaho districts. 🐟





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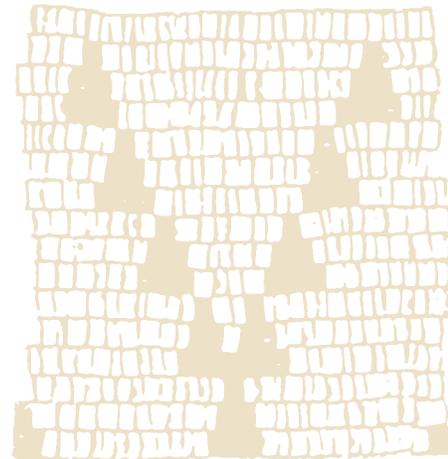
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## CRITFC Executive Director's Message

### Tribal Restoration Efforts Paying Off

Back in the 1970s, salmon runs were declining so quickly that there was a real worry that they would go extinct in some areas. In 1980, only 470,000 salmon passed Bonneville Dam—and that's adding up chinook, sockeye, and coho. In 1995, the tribes released the groundbreaking salmon restoration plan *Wy-Kan-Ush-Mi Wa-Kish-Wit*, which addressed salmon restoration solutions throughout the entire lifecycle—from gravel to gravel. Armed with this plan, the tribes went to work and right away there were signs of recovery.

This year's fall chinook run is the latest sign that the tribes' efforts are having a big impact on the health of salmon throughout the Columbia River Basin. This run has broken the record for the most fall chinook passing in a single day (almost 64,000!). The total number of fall chinook passing for the year is already a record high since Bonneville Dam was built, and the run isn't even over.

This year's return is in large part due to the wise guidance of tribal leadership and the dedication of the hundreds of tribal fisheries employees who have poured

their hearts and souls into the effort of restoring salmon. Thanks to their efforts, we hope returns like this year's will become the norm rather than the exception.

This year's run is certainly cause for celebration, but we still have plenty of work to do. The recent fish consumption advisory is a reminder that the Columbia River isn't the source of pure water that our ancestors enjoyed. The steelhead numbers are down and not all the tributaries are seeing the increased returns. The other chinook runs, steelhead, coho, and especially lamprey are still in need of all the efforts and resources we can give them.

*Wy-Kan-Ush-Mi Wa-Kish-Wit* has a goal of seeing 4 million salmon return to the Columbia River each year. We still have a long ways to go to reach that number, but seeing so many fall chinook swimming past the Bonneville Dam fish counting window gives us a lot of encouragement to keep up the work. 🐟



Paul Lumley  
YAKAMA