A fire at the Underwood In-lieu Site on September 15 destroyed or damaged much of the north end of the site. Early indications are the blaze started around 6:00 a.m. when a propane tank connected to a cooking stove that a resident was using caught fire. The fire quickly spread to destroy several other structures, vehicles, boats, fishing nets, and boat trailers. Johnny Jackson’s house, drying sheds, storage sheds, nets, and vehicles were completely lost. Several site residents and users were displaced as a result of the fire.

The Skamania and Klickitat County fire crews, Underwood Fire Department, US Forest Service, and Washington Bureau of Land Management assisted in containment. Yakama Nation fire crews were involved in the mop up and the Bingen and White Salmon Fire Departments responded to the fire. Lack of a water connection for the fire crews made it necessary for multiple fire departments with tanker trucks to respond to the fire in order to save as much of the site as they could. The local Red Cross was on site to assist victims who lost everything.

The current fall commercial fishery will delay a complete clean up of the site. A full clean up will require the site to be cleared out and closed during the work. The site will remain open until the fall commercial fishery ends to accommodate fishers currently using the site. After the fall commercial season ends, the CRITFC Fishing Site Maintenance team will coordinate with site users to remove undamaged gear, equipment, boats, vehicles, trailers, and campers. Once users have left the site, the team will remove the destroyed structures, vehicles, boats campers, trailers and storage structures. The clean up of the site will take several weeks.

CRITFC will be coordinating with the BIA, Yakama Tribal Housing, and the affected tribal members to assist with the lost housing needs.
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 total 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. On September 8, 67,521 chinook passed Bonneville Dam. This broke the record for the most fall chinook passing in a single day, the previous record made just last year. The total number of fall chinook passing for the year is already more than the entire annual salmon run back in 1980, and the run isn’t even over yet.

The past few year’s returns are 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 we’ve seen in the past few years 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 increased salmon returns. The other chinook runs, steelhead, coho, and especially lamprey are still in need of all the efforts and resources we can give them.

So far this year, over 1.8 million salmon have returned to the Columbia. Wy-Kan-Ush-Mi Wa-Kish-Wit has a goal of returning 4 million each year. We still have a ways to go to reach that number, but seeing so many fall chinook swimming past the Bonneville Dam fish counting window again this year gives us a lot of encouragement to keep up the work.

Salmon milling in the fish ladder pool prior to passing the counting window at Bonneville Dam. Photo taken on Sept 6.
**North Bonneville TFAS Water System Update**

Michael Broncheau, fishing site maintenance department manager

Water issues at the North Bonneville Treaty Fishing Access Site have been resolved. Earlier this year, two fishers’ camps were set up too close to the site’s pump house, which had an impact on the site’s water supply. During routine water testing, high coliform bacteria counts were detected and there was one positive *e. coli* test. This was the first positive *e. coli* test at any fishing access site. To address the situation, the campers were relocated and the site was cleaned up. Also, the systems in the pump house were upgraded to meet Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) standards. A new chlorination system was added and two 300-gallon tanks replaced a 500-gallon holding tank. The water systems of the fishing access sites with wells are all being upgraded to meet SDWA standards.

To prevent future damage to the water and septic system—as well as protect a Culturally Sensitive site identified by Yakama Nation Cultural Resources Department—signs and boulders are in place to prevent parking and inappropriate use.

If you have any questions or concerns about a site or need to report site problems, please contact the Fishing Site Maintenance Department manager Michael Broncheau at (503) 866-8375.

**FishCo Ice Sales**

Les Brown, CRITFC salmon marketing specialist

Once again, the Tribal FishCo Processing Plant at Bingen is selling ice to Indian fishers during the fall fishery. Sales are Monday through Thursday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm and Friday from 9:00 am to noon. During the peak run period, these hours can be expanded. Any changes to this schedule are announced on the CRITFC text message system. (See back page on how to sign up.) The ice is sold at-cost. Pricing is $40 to fill a standard tote. Other container sizes are priced accordingly. This ice distribution is made possible by the volunteer efforts of Rick and Kathy Trenery. If you have any questions about ice sales, call Rick at (541) 954-2689.

**Indian-Caught Salmon Steadily Improving**

Les Brown, CRITFC salmon marketing specialist

For thousands of years, tribal fishers have been harvesting salmon for cultural and ceremonial purposes, as well as bartering, trading and selling fish when there was enough to share. In recent years, the marketplace has increased the emphasis on purchasing high quality fish and many of you have responded by developing a harvest system that incorporates the three “R’s”: harvesting a cold wholesome resource, creating a reliable delivery system and developing good business relationships.

The results have been significant. The price fishers receive for their salmon has increased over three-fold from just a few years ago. Instead of a couple of buyers on the river, now we have many. Buyers come from as far away as San Francisco to purchase salmon directly from fishers. Indian fishers are developing new markets and transporting their fish off the river and receiving prices that make it worth their efforts. Fishers selling over the bank and at farmers markets have developed a steady supply of good paying customers.

We can do more. Our journey is just beginning. We can teach each other how to care for the fish. With the increase in price comes an increase in fishers coming to the river. Some fishers may not be familiar with the new three “R’s” and the importance of doing the basics: checking the nets more often, bleeding, icing and taking care of the fish while it’s on the boat. Higher quality promotes the efforts of all fishers.

We also need to remind each other about keeping safe while fishing. The weather can change quickly, which impacts conditions on the river. Making good decisions about when to go out to fish and wearing protective gear will foster safety.

▼ Brigham Campbell fishing at his family’s scaffold at Cascade Locks.
A Record-Breaking Day

On September 7, 67,024 fall chinook passed Bonneville Dam. The very next day, 67,521 passed, breaking the record for number of fish passing the dam since it was built back in 1938. Over those two days, 134,545 fall chinook passed Bonneville Dam—more fish than the entire fall chinook runs in 1992 (116,200) and 1993 (126,472).

The previous record one-day return was just last year, when 63,870 passed the dam on September 9, 2013.

On September 21, the one-millionth adult chinook of 2014 passed Bonneville Dam. As of that date, 1,154,744 adult and jack spring, summer, and fall chinook had passed the dam.

The flood of returning salmon has sidelined the CRITFC fish technicians that sample fish at Bonneville Dam. Fish have been passing at such a high pace that they can’t close the ladder gates that divert fish into the trap because it would back up salmon entering the ladder.