

## CRITFC Executive Director's Message

### OUR SHARED DUTY AND OBLIGATION TO PROTECT WATER

PAUL LUMLEY, CRITFC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Elders who fished at Celilo Falls talk about having small metal cups on a string that they would lower into the river to get a drink. It's hard to believe that even just 60 years ago, the Columbia River was clean enough that people drank directly from it without worrying about getting sick. Today, we spend millions of dollars on water treatment facilities to clean the very water that we have polluted. In a recent meeting with Gina McCarthy, Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, CRITFC Chairman Carlos Smith shared a story about being on a boat team that raced in Portland's Willamette River. He told how all the team members were encouraged to wear gloves and to avoid getting any river water splashed into their eyes because too much

contact with the polluted water could make them sick. Unfortunately, all the other plants and animals that depend on rivers and streams don't have the luxury of water treatment facilities or ability to wear protective gear. The salmon have no choice but to swim in the polluted waters; the lamprey have no choice but to grow and develop in gravel and sediment contaminated by toxic substances.

Our elders taught us time and again that water brings life. We honor *choosh* at all our ceremonies, opening and closing every feast with it as a sign of thanksgiving and gratitude to the Creator for this precious gift. This tribal teaching isn't just for tribal people—every single living thing on the earth depends on all humans learning what our ancient tribal wisdom has taught since time immemorial: water is sacred and requires our protection.



C. McKinley with catch on Big Island.  
Circa 1956. Photo courtesy the Matheny  
Collection.

I was invited to speak at a conference in Rome, Italy earlier this year. I told that audience of people from all over the world about Columbia River tribal culture and the importance of our natural resources. I explained why the tribes are so committed to protecting these resources and shared with them how the tribes particularly honor water. I also shared how our diets high in fish makes us suffer greater consequences from polluted waters. Hopefully the people who attended that conference will return home to their countries and remember the fundamental tribal understanding that water is sacred.

Protecting the environment that the Creator blessed us with is one of our central values and lies at the heart of who we are as a people. We have been taught to speak for the resources that have no voice, and I am so proud of our tribal leaders who speak for the water in their meetings with government officials. Water is essential and is worth all the sacrifice and effort it takes to make it pure. Unless others learn this essential tribal teaching, our waters will remain sick, which in turn will make everything sick. Clean rivers and streams aren't just a tribal treaty right, they are a human right; protecting and restoring polluted rivers and streams isn't just a government obligation, it's our obligation as humans. This is how we take care of our First Foods, and in return, these foods take care of us. 🐟



# Revised Water Quality Standards in Washington and Idaho

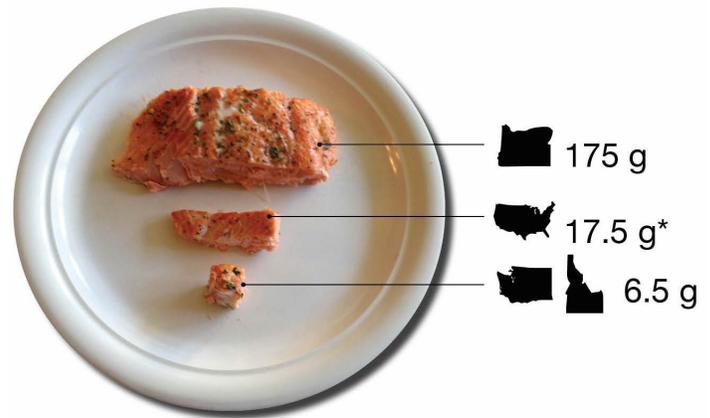
BY DIANNE BARTON, CRITFC WATER QUALITY COORDINATOR

Both Washington and Idaho are moving forward to update their surface water quality standards. These standards determine the “safe” level of pollution that industry and municipal wastewater treatment plants are allowed to discharge into streams and rivers of the state. The standards are based on several factors designed to protect human health from the effects of pollution. These factors include a fish consumption rate that represents how much fish residents of the state eat and a cancer risk level, which is the additional lifetime risk for developing cancer from being exposed to a pollutant. The fish consumption rate is an important factor because the more fish that people consume that contain toxic pollutants, the more they’re at risk for developing illnesses such as cancer and other diseases. What is considered safe for people who only eat one serving of fish per month might be very harmful to someone who eats one or more servings of fish every day. This is an important issue to the tribes, as tribal members generally eat much more fish than the general public, potentially exposing them to dangerous levels of toxics and putting them at a much greater risk of negative health effects.

In January, Washington Department of Ecology released a proposed rule for updating the state’s water quality standards. Tribes in the state and CRITFC have submitted letters to Washington Department of Ecology that oppose the new rule because although it is using a higher fish consumption rate, the benefit of this is completely counteracted by allowing a higher cancer risk. In essence, these changes say that it’s ok for residents to eat ten times as much fish because the state is ok with the resulting ten-fold increase in cancer risk.

Because of Washington’s delays in moving forward with a revised rule, the EPA is preparing to set water quality standards for the state. It remains to be seen if Washington will consider tribal opinions and revise the new rule before it is submitted to EPA for final approval.

In May 2012, EPA disapproved Idaho Department of Environmental Quality’s revised water quality standards because they only raised their fish consumption rate to 17.5 g per day (from 6.5 g). Last April, Idaho began a fish consumption survey of Idaho residents. At the same time, EPA began a fish consumption survey of Nez Perce and Shoshone-Bannock tribal members. Both surveys will end in April. The tribal study also includes an evaluation of heritage fish consumption rates that could be used to set water quality standards on reservation lands. The State of Idaho will use the results of both surveys and is expected to propose revised water quality standards by August. 🐟



*A portion of salmon equal to the daily fish consumption rate each state uses for its residents. The current daily amount for Washington and Idaho is about enough salmon to put on a cracker.*

## CRITFC Officers and Commissioners

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# OCEAN FISHERY PLANNING

BY MIKE MATYLEWICH

Among the many duties of Fish and Wildlife Committee Members and CRITFC Commissioners are delegations where they are sent to participate in the work of the Pacific Salmon Commission and Pacific Fishery Management Council. The Pacific Salmon Commission deals with implementation of agreements under the Pacific Salmon Treaty, which coordinates the management of Alaska, British Columbia, and southern US fisheries. The Pacific Fishery Management Council deals with Washington, Oregon, and California coastal fisheries. Fisheries in all these areas have impacts on upriver salmon stocks, primarily fall chinook, upper Columbia summer chinook, and coho. The tribes participate in these management processes to ensure that ocean fisheries are managed to stay within agreed limits on Columbia River fish.

Because the Pacific Fishery Management Council process is a public process, there are opportunities for the Columbia River tribes to provide public statements on issues of tribal concern. The tribes routinely provide information about the tribal gravel-to-gravel approach to salmon recovery and the importance of using hatcheries as one of the tools to aid in recovery. The tribes also provide information on the problems associated with non-Indian mark-selective fisheries and bird and sea lion predation. Over the years, the tribal leaders participating in these processes have received more and more positive feedback from government officials, officials from other tribes, and especially from many of the non-Indian fishers who have come to recognize that the hard work the tribes do for salmon recovery benefits everyone's fisheries. 🐟

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## TRIBES MEET WITH EPA ADMINISTRATOR GINA MCCARTHY

BY SARA THOMPSON, CRITFC PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Tribal leaders met with Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy in the CRITFC commission chambers in Portland on April 15. Administrator McCarthy is President Obama's chief environmental advocate. At the meeting, tribal leaders stressed their concerns over the transport of fossil fuels through the Columbia River Gorge and the importance of rail safety, climate change policies, and strong regional water quality standards.

CRITFC Chairman Carlos Smith, WARM SPRINGS, shared with McCarthy his concerns for the state of Columbia Basin waterways. "Fish advisories, high rates of cancer, and polluted waters are plaguing our communities and our foods," said Smith. "Addressing water quality issues must be a priority."



"The fact that water is polluted is disturbing,"

*CRITFC Chairman Carlos Smith welcomes EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy to the tribal meeting.*

Administrator McCarthy responded. "That's what got us into this business. The challenges are getting more complex. What isn't complex is our commitment to clean water, air, and land."

Commissioner Kathryn Brigham, UMATILLA, spoke of the importance of working together to address challenges facing the region. "We have been fighting very hard to get our resources protected and it's not just for us, it is for our future generations," Brigham explained. "But we can't do it alone. We need work together through partnership and collaboration in order to make that happen."

In her closing remarks, McCarthy shared her appreciation for and duty to the tribes. "EPA's priority is to institutionalize what we have learned about working with the tribes," McCarthy said. "I work for a President who really believes that we have a tremendous amount of work to do and that our obligations with the tribes haven't been met. We want to make sure the door he opened with you never gets shut." 🐟



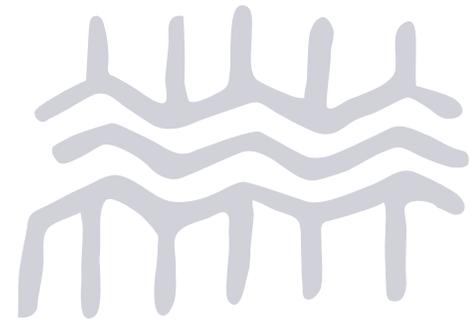


# The Dipnetter

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Text "critfc" to the number 555-888 to start getting fishery announcements on your cell phone. It's free!



# The Dipnetter

Yakama • Warm Springs  
Umatilla • Nez Perce



## CONTAMINANTS FOUND IN JUVENILE LAMPREY

Recent research by the U.S. Geological Survey and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission found that high levels of pesticides, flame retardants, and mercury in Pacific lamprey may be contributing to their overall decline in the Columbia River Basin. The findings were published in the journal *Environmental Pollution*.

"The levels of contaminants we are seeing in larval lamprey have caused developmental problems in salmonids in other studies," said Dr. Elena Nilssen, the study's principal investigator. "That is concerning to us."

Pacific lamprey are integral to ecosystem health. They provide valuable subsistence resources to tribal communities, bring important marine nutrients into freshwater areas, and serve as a buffer against juvenile salmon and steelhead predation by sea lions, terns, and other predators by providing an alternate food source.

"We can no longer ignore the role of water quality in



Photo courtesy US Fish and Wildlife Service

the health of our fish populations and our communities," said Carlos Smith, chairman for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission and tribal council member for the Warm Springs Tribe. "These recent findings only highlight the urgency to clean up our rivers and streams."

The research was the result of a multiagency effort. Numerous tribes and state and federal entities contributed to the work. 🐟