

## Winter Fishing Site Cleanup and Repair Progress

by Michael Broncheau, CRITFC Fishing Access Site Maintenance Manager



A very noticeable change at the Maryhill Fishing Access Site is the removal of a giant blackberry thicket (seen in inset). Photo courtesy Michael Broncheau.

This winter's fishing access site cleanup is progressing as planned. The cleanup follows this schedule established by the four member tribes:

- After fall commercial gill net season: Clean up trash, close down irrigation systems and fish cleaning stations.
- Four weeks after commercial season closure: Disposal of abandoned personal property (tents, mattresses, clothes, pots, pans, dishes, toys or anything else that can't be described as fishing gear or titled property).
- Next: Abandoned fishing gear is bagged and tagged and abandoned titled property (vehicles, boats, trailers, and campers) are marked and recorded.
- Finally, Fishing Site Maintenance tries to identify who owns the titled property. Ads are placed in tribal papers for remaining items. If no one claims the abandoned titled property, a BIA-approved vendor disposes of it. Abandoned fishing gear is held for two years. If you have had fishing gear or titled property removed, contact the CRITFC Fishing Site Maintenance Department to reclaim it.

The sites slated for cleanup this winter had a much larger amount of trash and abandoned property compared to previous cleanups. Fishing Site Maintenance crews removed nearly 500 cubic yards of trash and abandoned personal property from the sites. There was so much abandoned fishing gear that storage space for it is scarce. There were so many abandoned titled properties on the sites this year it will be impossible to remove them all. It appears fishers left vehicles, boats, campers, and trailers in an effort to reserve a campsite for next season.

Due to the scope of this cleanup and repair, the sites must be closed during the work. Roosevelt, Maryhill, Lyle, Dallesport, and Wyeth have been occupied since the close of last year's fishing season, delaying or limiting the cleanup efforts there. Unlike the In-lieu Sites, year-round occupation of the Treaty Fishing Access Sites is not authorized by the BIA. If you want your access site to be fully functional, you need to move off of the site long enough for the Fishing Site Maintenance Department to come in, make repairs, clean, and refurbish as needed. 🦞



# Accidental Net Damage

As we move into larger fishery seasons and therefore more nets in the water, there is a greater risk of net damage. Each year in Zone 6, fishers report watercraft like barges, sternwheelers, large commercial passenger liners, and small recreational or sport boats accidentally running over the nets. This can tear holes in the nets, pull them free from their anchors, or get tangled into propellers and carried away by the watercraft. The net damage ranges from minor and repairable to a total loss.

CRITFE officers respond to and take reports of the damaged gear incidents, but apprehending suspects is difficult or impossible without specific details from witnesses. CRITFE officers are there to help but with little or no eyewitness information, they have a difficult time taking the appropriate law enforcement action. In turn, fishers do not get the information they need to pursue restitution in a civil case and may not be compensated for the damaged gear. In both cases, the fisher is the one who ultimately loses.

CRITFE officers would like to help resolve these issues more efficiently, but to do so they need eyewitnesses with as much information as possible (*see below*). Armed with this information, CRITFE officers have a much greater chance to resolve criminal complaints and help fishers pursue those responsible for compensation. 🏠

## When you witness an incident

When you witness an accident or incident, the more information you can provide, the more likely the perpetrator will be brought to justice. Now that most people have cell phone cameras they carry around in their pocket, one of the easiest and most effective pieces of information that witnesses can provide is photos of the watercraft. Other information to pass on to CRITFE includes:

- Where and when the incident occurred
- Victim's name, contact information and type of gear damaged
- Names of any other witnesses
- Suspects, boat numbers, a description of the driver, how many people were involved, what direction they traveled after the incident
- Any other information they might think relevant

# Sea Lions on the Columbia



Unfortunately it has become the new normal for the return of spring chinook to also signal the return of sea lions to the Columbia River. They generally arrive at the beginning of March and stay through the end of May as they follow the spring chinook salmon migration.

CRITFC is an active partner with state and federal agencies in seeking ways to address this growing problem. The problem has complex causes and is complicated by requirements and protections the sea lions enjoy under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

The MMPA forbids hunting or harassing any marine mammals, which include whales, dolphins, porpoises, seals, sea lions, manatees, dugongs, sea otters, and polar bears within the waters of the United States. This is a very powerful federal law, but it does have certain allowances for fishers being impacted by them. These allowances are very limited, so probably the best policy is for fishers to steer clear of them and report any sightings of sea lions in Zone 6. Here are a few things to keep in mind in regards to this law:

- Under the MMPA, it is illegal for people to “harass” any sea lion in the wild. Harassment is defined as any act of pursuit, torment, or annoyance that has the potential to injure the animals or disturb their behavior.”
- Anyone caught harassing individual animals can be arrested and charged with a felony.
- Violations of the MMPA can result in maximum civil penalties of \$12,000 and maximum criminal fines of up to \$20,000 and jail time. The minimum penalty for a violation is \$200.

—Source: NOAA Fisheries website. 🏠

# Spring 2016 River Flow Forecast

by Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC Meteorologist

The spring snowmelt (or freshet) causes rising high water levels in the Columbia River and its tributaries each year. This condition helps get salmon smolts downriver quickly, but also makes it dangerous for fishers. CRITFC monitors river conditions and forecasts during the year. We inform fishers of the predicted timing and nature of the freshet to help improve their river safety. River flow will **increase in late April, peaking in early June** (flow will be fastest during that time), then recede through late June.

The NOAA-National Weather Service March 29 river spring-summer forecasts are at **101% of normal**.

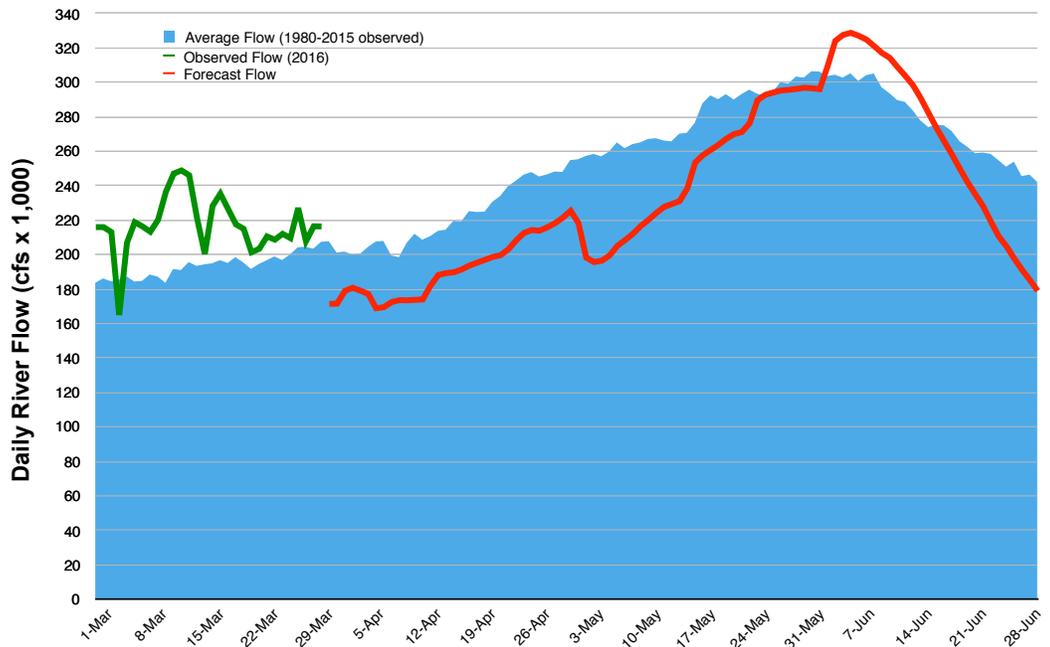
Despite the forecast for a strong El Niño, where winter conditions would be dry, warm, and poor snowpack accumulation, the season has seen more mountain snow than expected. This means that the freshet will be near normal this spring, giving favorable conditions for juvenile salmon migrating out to the ocean and for returning adults. Unfortunately ocean conditions are starting to sour (less oxygen and nutrients) which could challenge salmon survival.

Current snowpack accumulation throughout the Columbia Basin:

- ✦ **Upper Columbia:** 90 - 150% of normal
- ✦ **Washington Cascades:** 90 - 125% of normal
- ✦ **Oregon Cascades:** 50 - 110% of normal
- ✦ **Lower Snake and Clearwater:** 90 - 110% of normal
- ✦ **Southern Idaho:** 75 - 110% of normal.

Current snow levels are about 3,000 feet. 🏔️

**Columbia River at Bonneville: Observed & Forecast Flow**



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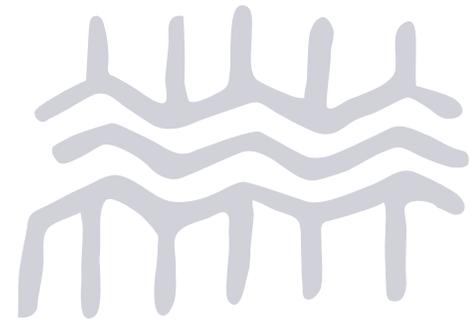


# The Dipnetter

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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

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## Remembering Celilo - Commemorating the 59th Anniversary of Loss

After the unfathomable loss of Celilo Falls, it was the culture, strength, resilience, and fortitude of the native people who lived along and fished in the Columbia River that carried them through this tragedy. The world is so very different from that fateful day 59 years ago, however much remains the same. The drumbeat of the First Salmon feast songs still reverberates on the cliffs above the ancient village each spring. Fishers up and down the river still net salmon from the same river their ancestors have for thousands of years. Worshippers still honor and give thanks to the Creator in traditional longhouses. By drawing on our culture and the examples of our ancestors, the native peoples of this region have stood firm against the enormous pressure of assimilation and erosion of tribal sovereignty. We have come through one of the darkest times in our history, and done so with our dignity, values, and culture intact.

Let us commemorate Celilo Falls by reflecting on its loss and pledging to do everything in our power to prevent such an act of ecological and cultural destruction from happening ever again. 



Alfred Tashwick and unnamed boy dipnetting on Chief Island; Albert's Island in background. August 13, 1952. Photo courtesy Matheny Collection