

Future of Our Salmon Conference

The Columbia Basin is home to numerous tribal nations on both sides of the US/Canada border. They all have long known that the actions and decisions of one group can impact and influence those who live both upstream and downstream. The understanding of this shared impact and responsibility to the natural resources of the region is one of the reasons that fifteen US tribes and seventeen Canadian First Nations came together for the second time to host the 2016 Future of Our Salmon Conference. These tribal nations are from and have ancestral use and management authorities throughout the entire Basin, from the upper reaches of the Columbia River in British Columbia, to the Snake River headwaters in Yellowstone National Park, to the mouth of the Great River as it empties into the Pacific Ocean. Their health and fate are linked—along with that of the entire region—to the health and fate of the waters of *N'Chi Wana*—the Big River.

One tribal creation story recounts how right after Salmon promised his body to feed the humans, Water spoke up and offered himself to be the home for Salmon. Not only is water a central part of Columbia Basin tribal religions and cultures, it is fundamental for life on earth. Protecting and restoring water is perhaps the most important aspect of protecting and restoring the Columbia River salmon. No one group can completely restore salmon alone, but the power of *wy-kan-ush* (sacred salmon) is reason for hope.

The world over, salmon affect the cultures of the people in which they come in contact. The widely different traditional cultures of Japanese Ainu, Pacific Northwest tribes, the Norwegian coastal areas, and the Russian Far East each have salmon returning to their lands and each share a reverence and gratitude for the bounty that salmon provide. The modern Pacific Northwest is no different. Salmon have shaped the culture of the newcomers to this region just as they




Pauline Terbasket, Executive Director, Okanagan Nation Alliance in front of the graphic poster of the conference. In the final panel was the theme that tied the whole conference together: “Water is Life” and our rivers are sacred and must be defended.

shaped tribal cultures before them. Salmon are the icon of this place. They are valued as food, as a resource, and as a representation of the wildness and wilderness for which the Pacific Northwest is known. They shape our land use policies and power grid. Whether they realize it or not, every single person in the Northwest is a *Wy-Kan-Ush-Pum*. We are all Salmon People.

HEALTHY FLOODPLAINS, LIVING RIVERS

The theme for the 2016 Conference was “Healthy Floodplains, Living Rivers.” It focused on the vital role that floods and floodplains play in healthy rivers. It gave attendees a broader knowledge of floodplain function and management and explored how the impacts from climate change alter these processes

Out of the conference, a call to action was developed to help guide tribal, state, federal, and academic efforts and study on how best to repair rivers that have been modified for convenience or flood control. 



Fall Fishery Update

by Stuart Ellis, CRITFC Harvest Specialist

The fall season fisheries have mostly wound down for the year. The 2016 commercial gillnet fisheries went through October 21. In total, there were 36 open days of commercial gillnet fishing, which is the most open days since 1989. Tribal fisheries harvested over 135,000 fall chinook—fourth highest fall season catch for the years for which we have catch records. Over 10,000 steelhead and 5,700 coho were also caught. Platform and hook-and-line fisheries remain open as of press time for both

subsistence and commercial use although fishing effort is quite low this time of year.

The tribes also set three sturgeon setline fishery openings, one for each of the Zone 6 pools. The preliminary catch in the John Day pool was 41 fish. The Dalles Pool opening resulted in a catch of ?? fish, and the Bonneville Pool fishery opened on November 14 and is still open. 🍷

How Tribal Mainstem Fisheries Work

Many tribal members who don't fish regularly in the mainstem of the Columbia have questions about how these fisheries work and why they often seem complex and confusing.

Mainstem fisheries are complex, but following is information that hopefully will make them a bit less confusing.

US v. OREGON MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

Mainstem fisheries are governed under agreements made by each of the four tribes, the states, and the US Federal Government under the *U.S. v. Oregon* process. Harvest impacts are set according to harvest rate schedules that are contained in the 2008-2017 *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement. The non-treaty harvest limits are also set by this agreement. Salmon and steelhead fisheries are divided into three major seasonal groups: the winter/spring season (January 1 – June 15), the summer season (June 16- July 31), and the fall season (August 1- December 31). Each season has different harvest limits. Chinook and sockeye fisheries have harvest rates that are based on the actual number of fish that reach the Columbia River mouth. Steelhead fisheries are based on the actual numbers of steelhead passing Bonneville Dam. Additionally, fall season fisheries have a limit on the number of larger steelhead which are known as Group B steelhead. Group B steelhead measure 78 centimeters (30 in.) or more. The *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement only limits the number of fish that can be harvested so that enough fish pass through fisheries to spawn and produce the next generation of fish. The harvest rates are designed to balance the desire to catch as many harvestable fish as possible while making sure weak stocks of wild fish are

not over harvested. The Management Agreement says nothing about how or when or what gear the tribes use to catch their share of the fish. The tribes make these decisions themselves. Some people think that CRITFC sets fisheries, but this is simply not true. CRITFC has no regulatory authority. Each tribe makes its own fishery regulations that allow its members to fish in mainstem fisheries. Membership in CRITFC offers all four tribes a way to meet together to discuss fisheries and under most circumstances reach agreement on fishing regulations. This actually helps each tribe exercise its individual sovereignty under the treaties. Tribal regulations don't need to be exactly identical, but the closer they are, the smoother fisheries work. Each tribe seeks input from its fishers who often have a variety of perspectives on what they want out of the mainstem fisheries. Some people fish only for subsistence. Some only commercially. Most do some of each. Some fish only in one area and others move around. The tribes have to balance giving as many people as possible a good opportunity to catch fish for the purposes they want, while keeping the overall fishery within the agreed to harvest rate limits. The tribes prioritize meeting ceremonial needs first, then subsistence needs, and if enough fish are available, providing fish for commercial opportunity. Obviously, it is never possible to give everybody everything they want. And since the science of predicting fish returns isn't exact, managing based on actual run sizes mean that fishing plans always have to be adjusted during the season.

When the tribes decide to allow commercial fishing, unlike the non-Indian fisheries, the tribes place no limits on the number of people who can participate or how much gear they can use. This makes it harder to predict how many fish will be caught, but the tribes want as



many people to have an opportunity to earn money from commercial fishing as possible. The tribes are responsible for deciding whether or not tribal members can sell fish, but the states of Oregon and Washington can decide whether or not non-Indian residents of the states can buy the fish. This is why each time the tribes set a commercial fishery, they take the proposal to the Columbia River Compact. This process allows the states and tribes to discuss the proposal and ensure that the proposal is not expected to catch more fish than allowed under the *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement. As long as the requirements of the Management Agreement are expected to be met, the states always agree to the tribal fishery and set regulations that allows non-Indians to buy the fish.

FIFTY PERCENT SHARE

Many people ask about the concept of 50% and whether the tribes get their fair share of the catch. The concept actually refers to having the opportunity to catch 50% of the harvestable number of fish that are destined to return to the tribes usual and accustomed fishing area. It should be noted that a broad interpretation of this concept will include catches in both mainstem and tributary fisheries. Stocks of Columbia River fish that are not destined to return to areas upstream of Bonneville Dam are generally not included in this concept. Unfortunately, because of the various needs and requirements to limit the harvest of fish that are listed under the Endangered Species Act, tribal fisheries generally are not able to catch the full 50% share of all the harvestable fish (which are mostly hatchery fish). Upper Columbia summer chinook are the exception to this where the harvest

rate agreement under the *U.S. v. Oregon* Management Agreement provides that for any run greater than the escapement goal, the tribes get to catch the full 50% share. For spring chinook, there is a new catch balance agreement for mainstem fisheries so even though neither treaty nor non-treaty fisheries can catch 50% of the harvestable hatchery fish, the non-treaty fishery is not allowed to catch more fish in the mainstem than the tribal fishery. Non-treaty fall chinook ocean (south of the US/Canada border) and in-river fisheries are also not allowed to catch more than 50% of the harvestable upriver fall chinook. Tribal fall season fisheries generally catch a few more upriver fall chinook than non-Indian in-river and ocean fisheries.

TRIBAL FISHERY MONITORING

As fisheries proceed throughout the year, the tribes monitor the catch and collect data on the fishery. Tribal fishery monitors work with fishers to collect the information needed to determine how many of various kinds of fish are caught. These catches are shared with each tribe and with the states and federal government. It is an important part of tribal sovereignty to manage the fisheries responsibly and share information with the other co-managers. Tribal fishers are encouraged to cooperate with tribal fishery monitors. This information is not intended to be used against the tribal fishery, but to assist the tribes in setting the best fishing seasons possible. It is through this management process that the tribes can ensure the best possible fisheries into the future while meeting the recovery needs for the wild fish that sustain us all. All of the Zone 6 tribal fishery monitors are from the Yakama Nation and we thank them for their hard work and dedication. ✨

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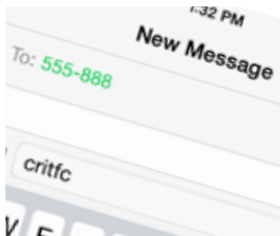
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Fishing Site Winter Clean-up and Maintenance Closures

by Michael Broncheau, CRITFC Fishing Site Maintenance Manager

Over the next three winters, twelve treaty fishing access sites will be closed for extensive clean-up and repairs. The 2016-2017 clean-up run from November through February.

During each closure, the maintenance crew will remove trash, abandoned property, and temporary structures; repair facilities, plumbing, and electrical systems; maintain the landscaping; and other repairs as necessary. Any personal and titled property left on a site during its designated clean-up period will be disposed of.

NOTE: Only one site will be closed at any given time. While a site is closed for the maintenance, all other access sites, including the five in-lieu sites, will remain open for use and will be maintained on a normal weekly schedule.

The closure schedule:

- ✦ Dallesport (Nov 1-18, 2016)
- ✦ Celilo (Nov 21-Dec 16, 2016)
- ✦ Pasture Point (Jan 2-20, 2017)
- ✦ North Bonneville (Jan 23-Feb 10, 2017)

If you use any of these sites, please remove your personal and titled property to help speed the work and prevent any unexpected losses. 🙌



Pasture Point Treaty Fishing Access Site