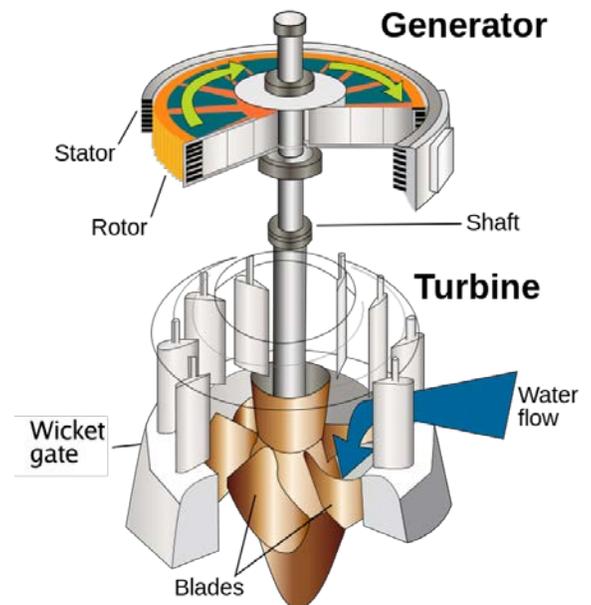


Corps to use Eco-Friendly Oil in Large Hydroelectric Dams for the First Time: Settlement in *Columbia Riverkeeper v. U.S. Army Corps* Will Reduce Toxic Oil

- In 2014, Columbia Riverkeeper (Riverkeeper) reached a groundbreaking settlement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), ending decades of unregulated oil pollution from eight of the largest hydroelectric dams in the nation. The settlement drew national and international attention, with the *New York Times* describing the settlement as having “national implications” and the *Wall Street Journal* describing it as “historic.”
- Now, for the first time in American history, the Corps is testing eco-friendly oils in large hydroelectric dams, as required by the settlement. If the tests are successful, the Corps must switch to eco-friendly oil in eight of America’s largest dams: Bonneville, The Dalles, McNary, Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite.
- A complete summary of Riverkeeper’s settlement with the Corps is available [here](#).

Status of the Corps’ Use of Environmentally Acceptable Lubricants

- In 2016 the Corps briefed Riverkeeper on the agency’s investigations into switching to Environmentally Acceptable Lubricants (EALs) at the eight dams. Specifically, the Corps informed Riverkeeper:
 - The agency intends to switch to EALs at the next scheduled maintenance in Fiscal Year 2017 for certain non-hydroelectric, in-water equipment that has a low risk of potential damage. Non-hydroelectric in-water equipment includes navigation locks and certain fishway equipment.
 - For other in-water equipment, the Corps is testing EAL use at the dams. The Corps’ contractor concluded that switching to EALs appeared technically feasible on wicket gates, a turbine component that releases oil into the river. The Corps is conducting “proof of concept” tests—or field tests—to evaluate the impact of EALs on the in-water hydropower equipment.
 - The proof of concept test for hydropower wire ropes began on certain at Ice Harbor in December 2015 and Bonneville in January 2016. The Corps will monitor the wire ropes for 12 months. According to a Corps report sent to Riverkeeper pursuant to the settlement, “[i]f deemed feasible, the Corps plans to switch to EALs on hydropower wire ropes at all eight [dam] projects.”



- The Corps plans to begin testing EALs in wicket gates at the Bonneville Second Powerhouse and McNary Dam in July and August 2016, respectively. The Corps will monitor the wicket gates for 12 months after introducing the EAL grease. If deemed feasible, the Corps plans to begin switching to EALs on each of the eight projects that have greased wicket gates.

Background

- The Corps had a history of oil spills and chronic pollution releases from the turbines and other dam equipment. Dams use large quantities of oil, including oil to operate partially submerged turbines. Under the Clean Water Act, no one—not even government agencies—can discharge pollution without obtaining a permit. Pollution permits restrict the types and amounts of pollution that enter rivers.
- Riverkeeper's lawsuit chronicled dozens oil spills at the dams, some of which contained cancer-causing PCBs. For example, a 1500-gallon oil spill from the Ice Harbor dam in 2012 contained PCBs at levels 14,000,000% greater than state and federal chronic water quality standards.
- Riverkeeper's settlement required that the Corps:
 - Investigate using Environmentally Acceptable Lubricants (EALs) at the dams and, if technically feasible, switch to these lubricants. Compared to conventional lubricants, EALs are less harmful to fish and other aquatic life. EALs are less toxic, biodegrade, and do not bioaccumulate in aquatic life. The Settlement Agreement called for the Corps to complete this assessment within twelve months of the Agreement, *i.e.*, by August 2015, and "to switch to using one or more EALs as a lubricant on the in-water equipment where the Corps has determine doing so is technically feasible" within eighteen months of the Settlement Agreement, *i.e.*, by February 2016.
 - Apply for pollution discharge permits from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. The Corps submitted applications in summer 2015.
 - Account for and reduce oil pollution from the dams while state and federal agencies develop pollution permits. Oil Accountability Plans track the addition, and then the removal, of all oil and grease to the dams and account for the difference.