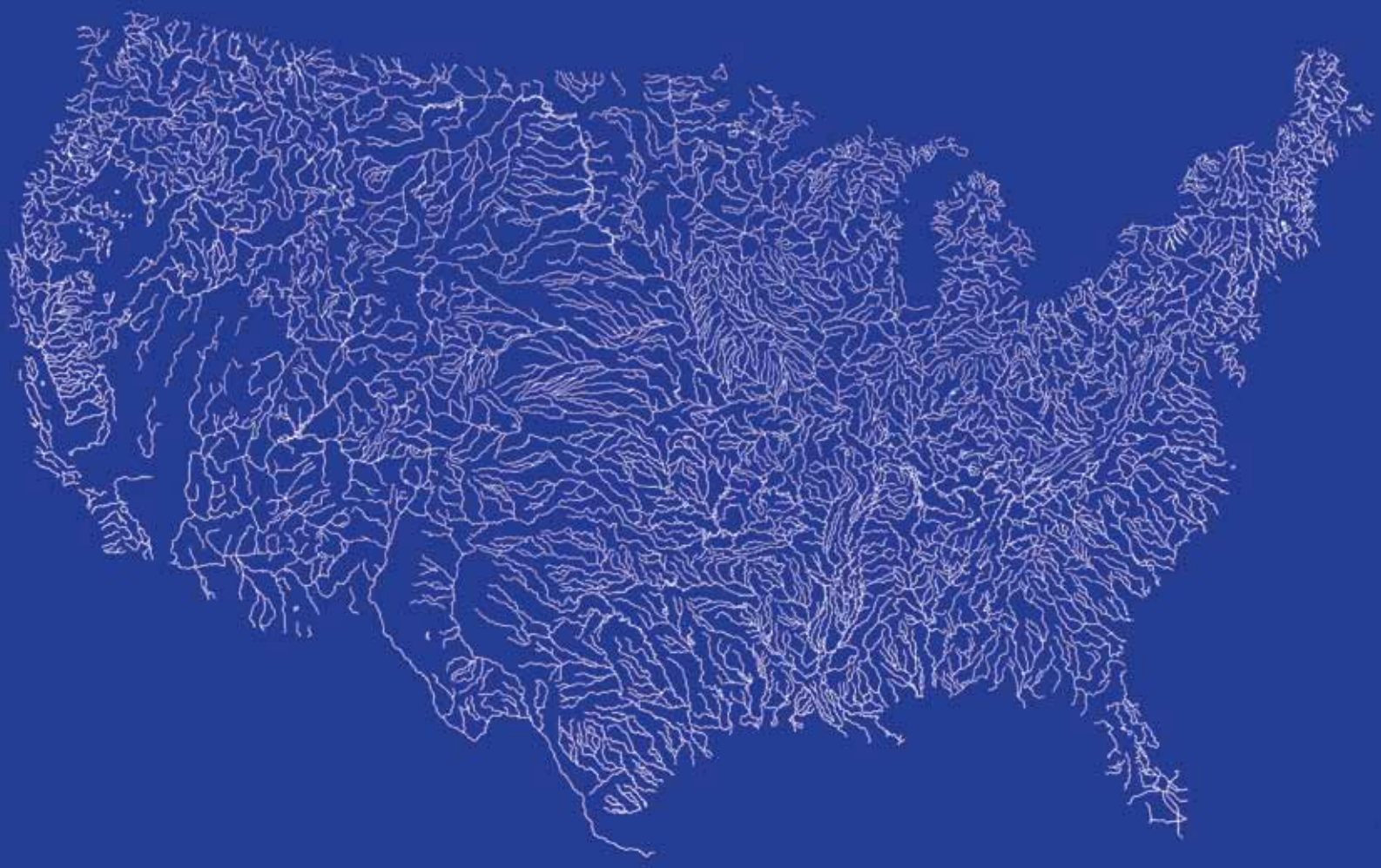
COLUMBIA RIVERKEEPER®

RIVER CURRENTS | 2016 Issue 3



THIS ISSUE:

Columbia Riverkeeper is a non-profit organization working to protect and restore the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean.

HOOD RIVER OFFICE
111 Third Street
Hood River, OR 97031

PORTLAND OFFICE
1125 SE Madison
Suite 103A
Portland, OR 97214

info@columbiariverkeeper.org
www.columbiariverkeeper.org

Join the conversation and keep up with the latest from Columbia Riverkeeper!

Tour of the Wind River with staff on Election Day.

River Notes

A LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Knowing Election Day is less productive in the office, I scheduled a staff field trip on November 8 to help a biologist collect data on salmon at a fish trap on the Wind River near Carson, Washington. Fish swim up a channel to avoid a waterfall and are captured in a small room, until sampled and released. The Wind River canyon is steep and wild, and the river charges through big Douglas fir and cedar trees.

I was feeling edgy this election season and I've become increasingly afraid of heights and small, enclosed spaces. As we traversed the muddy, exposed pathway down the canyon and crossed the two-foot-wide suspension bridge over churning water, I realized this was not the best idea. Reaching the fish trap, the biologist opened a metal trap door and I looked down the ladder into a concrete room the size of a jail cell below the river level. I took a deep breath and climbed down the ladder into the enclosed space and knee-deep water.

I was planning my escape when the biologist measured a winter steelhead, took a scale for DNA testing, and passed me the anesthetized fish to carefully release upstream. I held the steelhead so cold water could flow over her gills. She was pure wildness. I looked around the small cell and took a deep breath. She flared her gills and took a deep breath. I was no longer anxious. I felt her strength as she gained vigor. I let go. She swam to deep water, ready to ascend the rapids, ready to complete her journey.

Brett VandenHeuvel

RIVERKEEPER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, Brett VandenHeuvel

Cover: We are a nation united by rivers. After a divisive election, "All Things Merge Into One" by Nina Montenegro / The Far Woods, spoke to us. Visit Nina's work on her Etsy page: www.thefarwoods.etsy.com, and her pop-up shop at our Member Appreciation Party on Dec. 6, 2016, at 6:30pm at the Portland Lagunitas Community Room.

Back: Columbia River from Rooster Rock State Park, photo by Liv Smith.

Election 2016: **Moving Forward**

By Brett VandenHeuvel, *Executive Director*

Photo by Paloma Ayala.

I don't want to sugarcoat the Trump election. Donald Trump made campaign promises to roll back environmental regulations that protect our air and water. He is an avowed climate change denier. **We need to come together to protect what we love. We must act.** Here are Riverkeeper's plans:

- **Be inclusive.** First, we will work to be more inclusive of everyone in our communities. We will take the time to show kindness and respect, and learn from each other. This is an important lesson.

- **Focus on the local.** Together, we can make tremendous positive changes at the local and state level and have a global impact. We must expect more from our local leaders and support them in doing more. We pushed Portland, for example, to ban new, large-scale fossil fuel infrastructure. A President cannot undo this. We can also prevail over coal, oil, and methanol when local and state leaders deny permits.

- **Keep informed.** Our work to test the river to make sure it is safe to swim will continue during a new administration. We will collect data and steward our river.

- **Be aggressive.** We need watchdog organizations now more than ever. We will redouble our efforts organizing communities, building local leadership, and enforcing environmental laws. We will fight for clean water.

- **Grow.** Thanks to you, Riverkeeper has grown to over 12,000 members. As the threats increase, we will grow stronger, amplify your voice, and meet more challenges. As we grow, we will remain bold, nimble, and driven.

Of course we must play defense too. We will challenge executive policies that harm clean water and clean air. If Congress attempts to repeal our nation's bedrock environmental laws–the Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, and Endangered Species Act–we will stand with national allies to defend the laws. Despite many attempts since 1972 to gut them, the laws endure. They will continue to endure.

Protecting our water, air, and wildlife is extremely important to the American people. The Clean Water Act ranks among the most popular statutes ever passed. We must be vigilant to defend these laws, but I'm confident we can succeed.

Today is not a time for despair. We are looking forward. We are organizing. Thank you for being part of something bigger than yourself. And thank you for standing up for what you believe in.

Gas Giants:
Methanol Terminals, Gas-Fired Power Plants Target the Northwest

Columbia River at Kalama, WA, site of the proposed world's largest gas-to-methanol refinery.

China-Bound Methanol Would Open Door to New Fracked Gas Development in the Northwest

By Dan Serres, *Conservation Director*

Methane to Methanol–A Profound Shift in the Fracked Gas Landscape

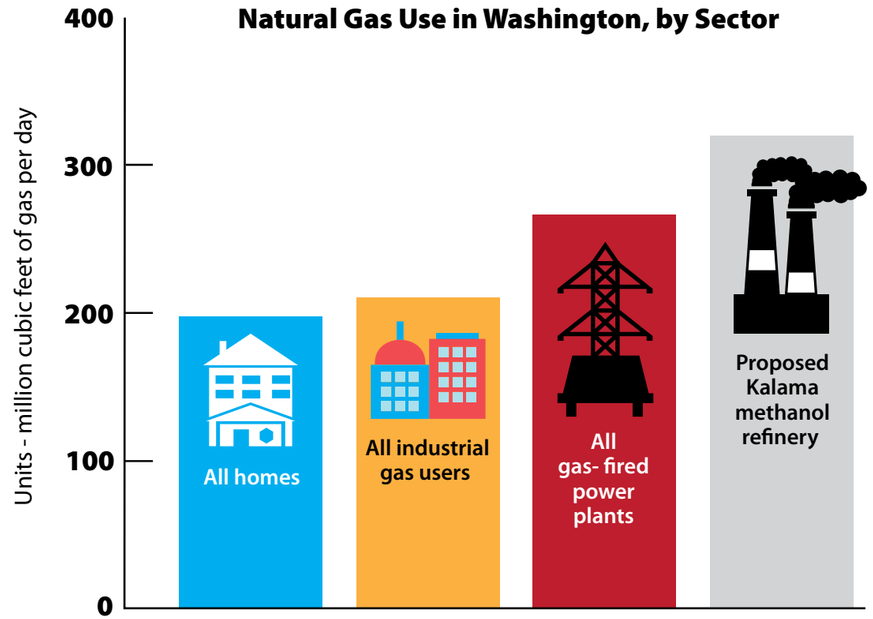
A subsidiary of the Chinese Academy of Sciences called Northwest Innovation Works seeks to build methanol refineries in Kalama, Washington, and Port Westward, Oregon, to take advantage of cheap natural gas, power, and water on the lower Columbia River. The refineries would convert natural gas to methanol for export to China to produce plastics. This article focuses on the Kalama refinery because the permitting is more advanced.

Riverkeeper is collaborating with local residents to oppose the world's largest gas-to-methanol refinery. The proposal would degrade salmon habitat and become one of the biggest air polluters in the State of Washington. Through public outreach and legal action, Riverkeeper is exposing how these massive methanol proposals would profoundly increase the region's consumption of fracked gas.

Why is fracked gas such a big deal? It is primarily comprised of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. Methane leakage from gas wells and pipelines has led scientists to conclude that fracked gas can be as bad for our climate as coal. Additionally, gas production in North America relies heavily on hydraulic fracturing (fracking), a process famous for polluting air and water, endangering the health of nearby residents.

The Kalama methanol refinery would use a stunning volume of natural gas; 320 million cubic feet per day, more than all other industry in Washington combined.

The gas giant in Kalama would bloat the region's contribution to methane pollution, undercutting the Northwest's efforts to address climate change.



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration for Washington 2015; Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Assessment of the Refinery's Natural Gas Supply Pipeline

Why is Fracked Gas a Problem?

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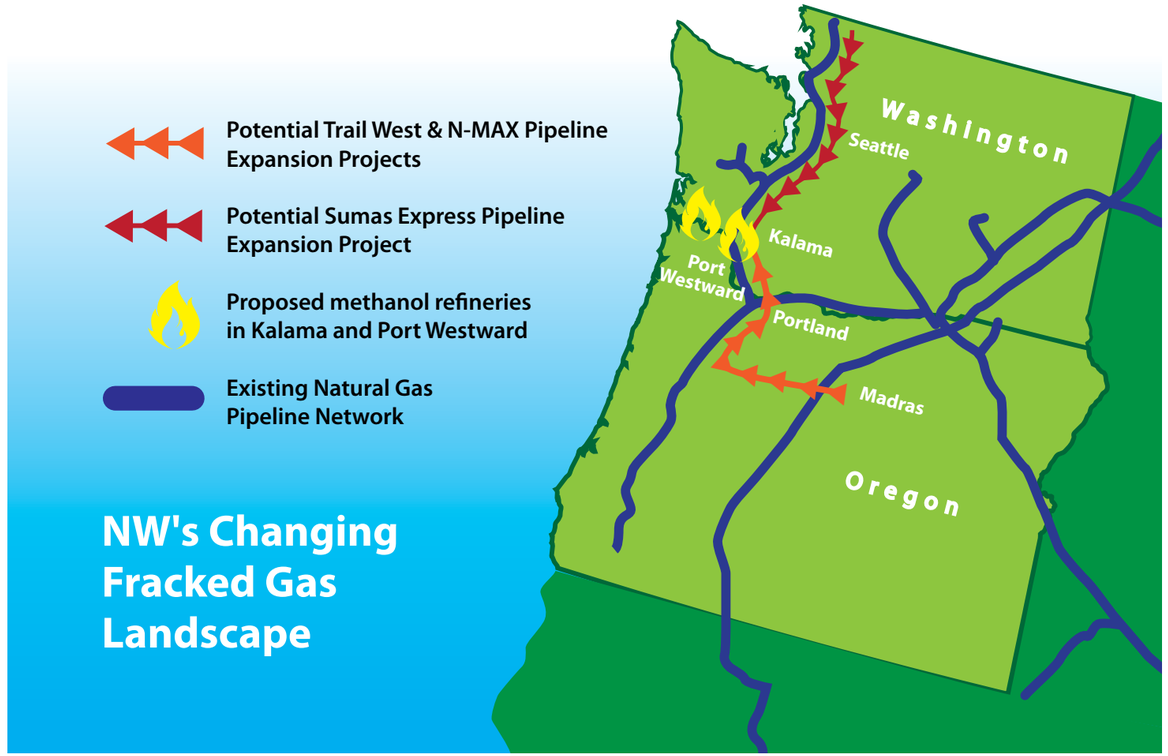
Surprisingly, state and federal agencies have failed to address the long-term implications of the Kalama methanol refinery. This fall, Riverkeeper called on regulatory agencies to investigate the full impact of exporting fracked gas to Asia as methanol. And with support from local activists, we are challenging the inadequacy of local reviews that ignored how methanol could trigger new pipelines.

"Bridging the Gap"–New Pipeline Proposals Coming

How would the methanol refinery obtain its enormous supply of fracked gas? Thus far, the pipeline and methanol companies have failed to explain how regional pipelines could deliver enough gas to the refinery. But newly released documents from the gas company NW Natural are revealing. NW Natural could lease pipeline capacity to the Kalama methanol refinery. NW Natural told the Oregon Public Utilities Commission, ***"This arrangement is intended only to bridge the gap in time between the commencement of methanol plant operation and the in-service date for an upstream infrastructure expansion, say three years."*** [1] NW Natural admits that a new pipeline ("upstream infrastructure") would be needed to supply the methanol refinery. Pipelines are highly controversial because they lock in long-term fossil fuel use and corporations can use the power of eminent domain to take private property.

Two proposed pipeline projects could feed the methanol refinery in Kalama. The first, called Sumas Express, would expand southbound pipeline infrastructure from the Canadian border to Kalama. The second potential project, called Trail West, would

[1] **NW Natural. Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). September 2016. P. 3.38.**



establish a new pipeline through the Mt. Hood National Forest and push gas north towards Kalama. Northwest residents have defeated these controversial pipelines before–when they were proposed to feed huge liquefied natural gas export proposals in the Columbia River Estuary.

Surprisingly, state or federal agencies have failed to address the long-term implications of the Kalama methanol refinery. This fall, Riverkeeper called on regulatory agencies to investigate the full impact of exporting fracked gas to Asia as methanol. And with support from local activists, we are challenging the inadequacy of local reviews that ignored how methanol could trigger new pipelines.

Coal to Gas Gets Us Nowhere Fast

The gas industry's plans for the Northwest extend beyond methanol export to China. Indeed, a major project like a methanol refinery can open the door to additional methane-guzzling industries. According to a 2015 report from the Northwest Gas Association, an industry group that promotes natural gas development: "Once a new large volume customer (such as a methanol terminal) selects its preferred infrastructure project–and signs a contract–*other loads will follow and the project will be built accordingly.*"[2] Once established for methanol, new pipelines could be used to deepen the Pacific Northwest's reliance on fracked gas by supplying gas-fired power plants and other methane-intensive industries.

Already, power companies in the Pacific Northwest are planning new and expanded gas-fired power plants. Replacing coal-fired power plants with new natural gas plants is not the change we need. Portland General Electric has proposed over 1,300 megawatts of new gas-fired power at the site of its retiring 500 megawatts coal-fired power plant at Boardman, Oregon. Portland General Electric's plans would demand up to 230 million cubic feet of gas per day–over one-third of Oregon's gas daily consumption.

The climate consequences of the gas industry's plans are enormous. Recent studies from leading climate scientists show that a transition from coal to natural gas would overtop the world's carbon budget. Climate activist Bill McKibben told *Rolling Stone* this year, "At this point, effective action would require actually keeping most of the carbon the fossil-fuel industry wants to burn safely in the soil, not just changing slightly the speed at which it's burned."

Riverkeeper and activists throughout the region have had great success at preventing pollution from coal, oil, and natural gas by stopping huge export terminals in Oregon and Washington. And, together, our work in 2017 will be critical to determine whether "gas giant" methanol plants and gas-fired power plants take root in the Pacific Northwest.

[2] **http://www.nwga.org/naturalTgasTinfrastructureT2015/!!**

Let's Protect this River that We Love: Joe Oakes, Ancient Swimmer

Photo by Paloma Ayala

Last Labor Day weekend, 465 swimmers took an early morning plunge into the Columbia River and swam over a mile back to Hood River. These hardy folks participated in the 74th Roy Webster Cross-Channel Swim, the Columbia River's biggest and oldest official swim event.

Long-time Columbia Riverkeeper member Joe Oakes jumped in for his 15th swim–but not quietly. First, Joe asked his fellow swimmers to contemplate the challenges facing the Columbia River and to take action. He had this message:

At 82 years old, I hope that I will be able to do [this swim] a few more times. But I need your help. There are forces that may put the future of the river in danger. Oil trains, as we have recently seen, present a clear danger to the purity of the water. Coal trains, running uncovered, will deposit a constantly increasing layer of dust on both the shore and into the water. And the river contains too much bacteria at times, which can make us sick.

Here is how you can help to defend your river: First, let your representatives in Washington and Salem know that you are expecting them to take strong action: that is their job to protect our state, and they answer to you, the voter. Why not do it today? Second, get involved with others who really care about our river.

The best way for us swimmers to protect the Columbia River is through Columbia Riverkeeper, a non-profit that works to protect and restore the Columbia. To keep up their great work, they need our support. Riverkeeper is fighting dangerous oil and coal trains, as well as testing the water for E. coli so we know it is safe to swim.

I've been a Riverkeeper member since 2002. I encourage you to join today. Let's protect this river that we love.

Joe Oakes, Ancient Swimmer

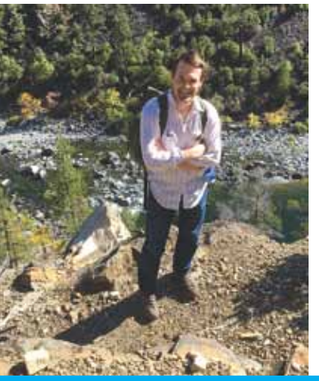
Training the Next Generation of Leaders and Advocates

Photo by Liv Smith

Riverkeeper proudly trains future environmental attorneys and activists, while working on our region's most pressing issues. Clerkships with Riverkeeper provide skills and real-world experience to inspire talented people to dedicate their careers to public interest causes.

You can find past Riverkeeper law clerks prosecuting environmental crimes, promoting sustainable agriculture, and serving on a progressive legislator's staff in the halls of Congress.

Here, past law clerks reflect on how a summer in the trenches at Riverkeeper enhanced their careers fighting the good fight.



Carter Moore
Law Clerk, Summer 2012
Southern Oregon Public Defender, Inc.

Interning with Columbia Riverkeeper was the best experience I had in law school. During my internship, I worked on a wide variety of projects in different stages of development, and I had the opportunity to collaborate with Riverkeeper staff and members of the larger Riverkeeper community. Not only was my internship fun, it prepared me for the actual practice of law more than any other law school activity.

I currently work as a public defender in Southern Oregon. Just as Riverkeeper's attorneys shared their passion for a clean and healthy Columbia River with government agencies and the public, I strive to share my passion with juries, so that they can begin to see the world from my clients' eyes.

Candice McLaughlin
Law Clerk, Summer 2013
Assistant Attorney General, State of New Jersey Environmental Enforcement

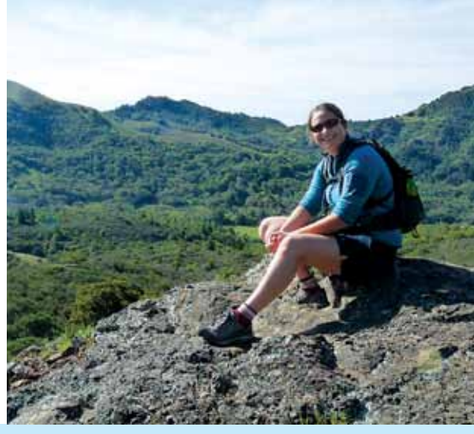
Most internships involve legal research and writing, but interns at Columbia Riverkeeper learn so much more than that. Being a nonprofit environmental attorney requires wearing many hats: legal counsel, public advocate, teacher, and being a part of a much bigger campaign team. Weekly staff meetings exposed me to all aspects to running a successful environmental campaign, giving me first-hand insight into how the role of environmental attorney fits into the bigger picture.

Today, I am an Assistant Attorney General on New Jersey's environmental enforcement team. My experiences at Columbia Riverkeeper created a solid foundation for my legal career and served as a springboard to becoming an environmental lawyer.

Andrea Lang Clifford
Law Clerk, Summer 2014
Policy Analyst, Green Energy Institute

Clerking for Columbia Riverkeeper in the summer of 2014 was undoubtedly one of the best experiences of my law school career. It was my first legal job, and Staff Attorney Lauren Goldberg immediately threw me into the thick of things.

Now that I've graduated from law school with a J.D. and LL.M. in Environmental, Natural Resources, and Energy Law, I'm a policy analyst for the Green Energy Institute at Lewis & Clark Law School. My passion for transitioning away from dirty fossil fuels grew at least in part from my clerkship with Columbia Riverkeeper; learning about the local effects of fossil fuel transportation and infrastructure added to my already deep concerns regarding the global impacts of fossil fuels.



Alexis Andiman
Law Clerk, Summer 2011
Associate Attorney, Earthjustice, New York

I have many wonderful memories of my internship, including discussing legal strategy with Riverkeeper's attorneys, learning to sample water quality with Jasmine and, of course, paddling the Hanford Reach with Dan and Riverkeeper's supporters.

Now that I've graduated from law school and begun to supervise interns myself, I realize how much I learned during my experience at Riverkeeper. Lauren invested a tremendous amount of time and care into commenting on and helping to improve my written work. I'm grateful for her thoughtful guidance, which truly helped me learn to write and think like a lawyer.

Eagle Habitat – Not Coal Habitat

By Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky, *Senior Organizer*

What's more patriotic than ensuring future generations have clean air and water? I'll tell you. It's releasing a rehabilitated bald eagle back into the wild just miles from the proposed site of the nation's largest coal export terminal. Cowlitz County, Washington, is ground zero in the movement to stop coal export. And, six years into the fight, the eagle release inspired hope at a critical moment when government officials are nearing major decisions about coal export.

Credit for fostering and rehabilitating the eagle goes to the Audubon Society of Portland's amazing team. A Good Samaritan spotted the injured eagle along Highway 30 near Clatskanie, Oregon, and brought it to the Audubon. After two months at Audubon's Wildlife Care Center, the eagle was ready to go back into its native habitat.

Mary Lyons, along with her grandson, Jonah, opened the gate back to freedom for the healthy bald eagle.

Photo by Grace Young
Portland Audubon Society

Over one hundred people came out to witness the release at Willow Grove Park in Longview, Washington. Columbia Riverkeeper member and outstanding activist, Mary Lyons, along with her grandson, Jonah, opened the gate back to freedom for the healthy bald eagle.

For most Americans, spotting a bald eagle is a conversation-halting moment. For the people of Cowlitz County, the eagle release was a well-deserved pause from the phone banks, hearings, rallies, and meetings necessary to protect the region from coal export. It was a reminder that, together, we can keep toxic coal dust, rumbling coal trains, and coal tankers out of bald eagle–and human–habitat.

Riverkeeper Happenings

There is never a dull moment on the Columbia! Here are some highlights.

METHANOL RALLY
September 14, 2016: Nearly 150 people rallied in Kalama, Washington, against the proposed Kalama methanol refinery. If built, it would be the world's largest methanol refinery and increase Washington's natural gas consumption by 37 percent. Learn more at www.columbiariverkeeper.org/our-work/methanol/.

SALMON VIEWING ON THE KLICKITAT
September 10, 2016: Onlookers observed dip-netting at Lyle Falls on the Klickitat River after listening to Doug Rigdon, owner of Wild Columbia Salmon, explain the cultural importance of traditional Native American salmon fishing at Riverkeeper's "Love Your Columbia: Fall Salmon Viewing on the Klickitat."

DONATE TODAY! Visit **www.columbiariverkeeper.org** or email **info@columbiariverkeeper.org**. Thank you for your support!

COLUMBIA UNDER THE MICROSCOPE
October 5, 2016: Elena Nilsen, Tawnya Peterson, and Jennifer Morace presented their research on industrial and pharmaceutical contaminants in the Columbia River to a full house at Lucky Lab Brewing in Portland for Riverkeeper's "Columbia Under the Microscope" event.

SALMON VIEWING AT EAGLE CREEK
October 8, 2016: With the sights and sounds of spawning salmon as the backdrop, participants in Riverkeeper's "Love you Columbia: Fall Salmon Viewing at Eagle Creek" listened to Kat Brigham of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and Brigham Fish Market discuss salmon restoration in the Columbia River Basin.

Thank you to all who participated in Love Your Columbia Day events!

LOVE YOUR COLUMBIA DAY
August 20, 2016: Columbia Riverkeeper celebrated the 2016 Love Your Columbia Day with community river cleanups, invasive species eradication, and restoration projects in local communities along the Columbia. Thank you to our partners: All Adventures Rafting, Astoria Parks & Recreation, Billea Smith-Austin, Clark County Parks & Recreation & Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership, Columbia Land Trust, David Tifft, Ecova Inc., Friends of the White Salmon River, Gorge Fly Shop, Klickitat Trail Conservancy, Lake Windermere Ambassadors, Photos by Liv Smith, NatureConnect NW, Riverside Community Church, UCC, Solve Oregon, and Vancouver Watersheds Alliance, for making it such a successful day to give back to the Columbia River and its tributaries.

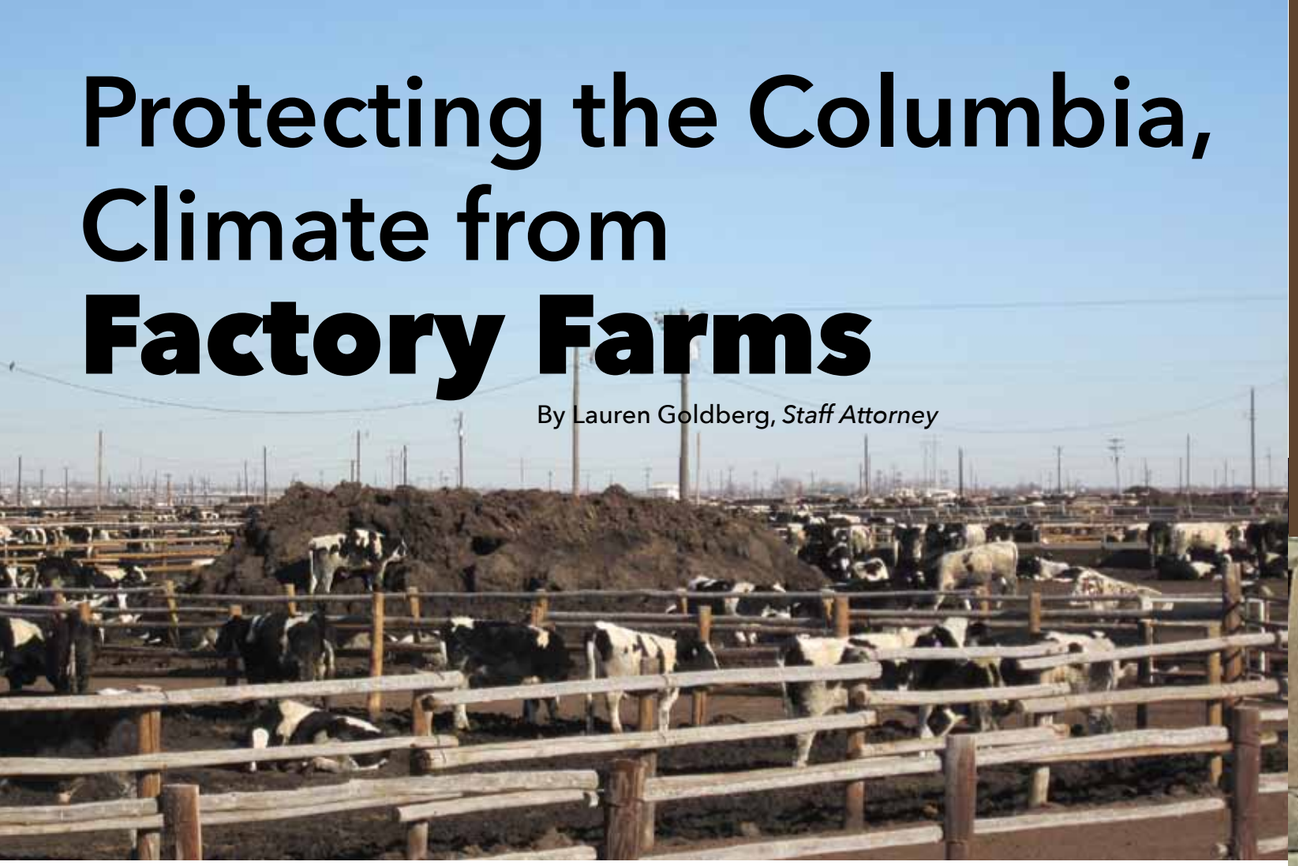
TEMPERATURE TALK
August 24, 2016: Last summer, hundreds of thousands of heat-stressed sockeye died before reaching their spawning grounds. Riverkeeper's informative talk: "Hot Water, Fish Kills, & the Future of Salmon," with opening remarks by Hood River Mayor Paul Blackburn, discussed this tragedy. Featured speakers included Environmental Modeler Matthew Shultz, MESc Yale 2016, and Riverkeeper Attorney Miles Johnson. Thanks to Slopeswell Cider Co. for hosting a fun and informative evening.

Staff Attorney Lauren Goldberg and Hood River Mayor Paul Blackburn

Share your stories about the Columbia River and photos by emailing us: **info@columbiariverkeeper.org. Follow our work on social media, too.**

Protecting the Columbia, Climate from **Factory Farms**

By Lauren Goldberg, *Staff Attorney*



Imagine a new city with 690,000 people–larger than Portland–springing up along the Columbia River. Can you fathom a city that big without a proper sewage treatment system? Of course not. That would threaten public health, jeopardize communities that use the Columbia for drinking water and swimming, and harm water quality for salmon.

But a California businessman is proposing just that in Morrow County, Oregon. Not a city for people; instead, a massive factory farm with 30,000 dairy cows not far from the Columbia River. The factory farm would generate waste on par with a city of 690,000, but the manure would not go to a wastewater treatment plant. Instead, the factory farm would flush its waste into giant earthen pits where it would decompose and then be dumped onto neighboring fields. This threatens water quality in the Columbia River and nearby drinking water sources that are already degraded by agricultural pollution.

Factory farms get a free pass to pollute without meeting modern pollution control requirements, and this poses a real threat. That's why Riverkeeper is fighting to end factory farm loopholes and stop one of the biggest factory farms proposed in Oregon history, the Lost Valley Ranch.

The Lost Valley Ranch wants to turn nearly 6,000 acres of tree farm near Boardman, Oregon, into a mega-dairy. According to government filings, the proposed dairy would generate 187 million gallons of manure annually. That's a lot of poop.

Holding Back a National Pollution Epidemic

"We are not talking about Old MacDonald's Farm," explains Kendra Kimbirauskas, a third-generation farmer and co-founder of Friends of Family Farmers. "Confining thousands of animals in one location and concentrating the waste can lead to widespread pollution of our air and water, which can harm the local environment and threaten public health."

Factory farms across the country are contaminating rivers and underground drinking water sources with bacteria, nitrates, phosphorus, and pharmaceuticals. Case in point: the Yakima Valley, Washington. More than a third of homes in the Lower Yakima Valley get drinking water from private wells. And at least twenty percent of those wells are so contaminated with nitrates that people cannot drink the water. The largest source of pollution: manure from dairy cows.

Factory farms are also bad for our air and climate. Feces and urine from factory farms contain over 160 toxic gases, including hydrogen sulfide, carbon monoxide, ammonia, methane, and carbon dioxide. These chemicals are dangerous to local public health, and the carbon dioxide and methane are potent greenhouse gases.

In 2005, another Oregon mega-dairy near Boardman admitted to releasing 5.6 million pounds of ammonia into the air each year, a byproduct of decomposing manure. The U.S. Forest Service cited this ammonia release as a major source of acid rain and haze in the Columbia Gorge.

Pollution is Pollution is Pollution

Whether pollution comes from an industrial factory or a factory farm, the impact is the same: dirty rivers, toxic air, and undrinkable water. Factory farms shouldn't get a free pass. For years, Oregon has turned a blind eye to industrial-scale air pollution from factory farms and imposed weak controls on water pollution.

No more.

Riverkeeper is at the heart of a growing campaign to keep factory farm pollution in check. Working with diverse partners–from family farmers to animal welfare advocates to Columbia River tribes–we are taking on factory farm pollution. First up: asking Governor Brown for a moratorium on new factory farms until Oregon ends unchecked air pollution and adopts stronger rules to protect water quality. The mind-boggling scale of pollution from just one new factory farm sends a clear message: Oregon's era of treating industrial-scale farms with kid gloves must end.

Oregon is already home to one of the nation's largest dairy factory farms–the 70,000 head Three Mile Canyon Farms in Morrow County. Now California-based dairy operators want to convert nearly 6,000 acres of former tree farm near Threemile Canyon and operate the state's second largest dairy, Lost Valley Ranch.

Satellite image of Three Mile Canyon Farms in Morrow County.

Riverkeeper Science: Medicating Our River

By Lorri Epstein, *Water Quality Director*

Dipping his purple-gloved hand into the Columbia, Riverkeeper volunteer Patrick Haluska fills a large glass bottle with water. Back on the riverbank, Patrick filters the water into three small vials and packs them in a cooler to ship to Tawnya Peterson's research lab at Oregon Health & Science University. These and other samples, collected by Riverkeeper volunteers all along the Columbia, will be tested for the widely-prescribed antidiabetic drug metformin.

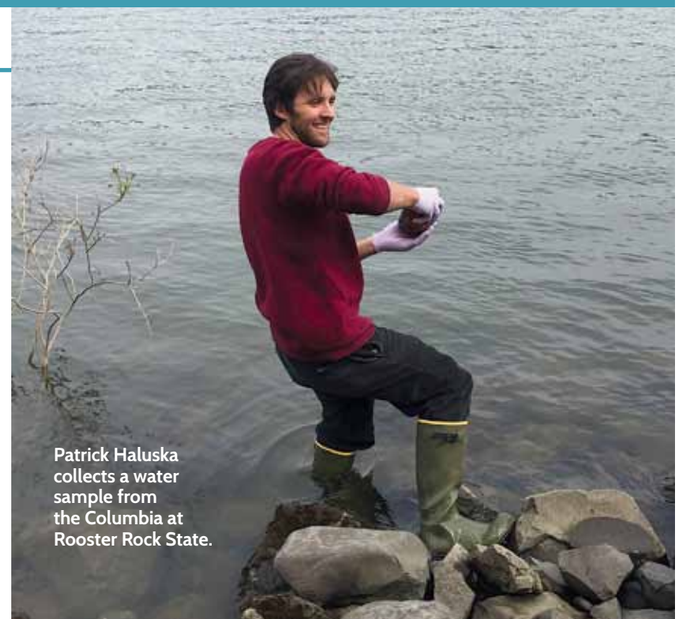
Metformin is one of the most common drugs found in U.S. rivers and streams. Metformin treats high blood sugar in humans, but studies show that metformin also harms sexual development and breeding in fish. The drug enters our waterways after passing through human bodies and sewage treatment plants, which are not designed to remove it.

We know that metformin is entering the Columbia, but we know little about its distribution or how it is impacting the environment. Peterson's study will assess where, when, and how much metformin exists in the lower Columbia. This research may also help us understand the major sources, and the potential ecological effects, of metformin in our river.

Unfortunately, metformin is only one example of a slew of chemicals whose impacts on Columbia River fish–and people who eat them–we are just beginning to understand. A 2012 Riverkeeper-supported study by Jennifer Morace of the United States Geological Survey found prescription drugs, plasticizers, steroids, personal care products, detergents, flame retardants, and other toxic contaminants in the sewer discharges from nine cities along the Columbia. Riverkeeper is excited to support cutting-edge scientific studies to better understand the impacts of this type of toxic pollution. These studies provide essential information about emerging threats to the Columbia and are critical to developing response strategies and protecting our river and our communities.

What can you do?

- **Be aware of the products you use in your home and on your body.** Visit **www.ewg.org** to search and check the safety of personal care products.
- **Dispose of pharmaceuticals properly.** DON'T EVER FLUSH! Return unused and expired medication to MedReturn drop boxes. Check **www.MedReturn.com** to find the box nearest to you.
- **Support Riverkeeper.** Help us continue our work to hold polluters accountable, reduce toxic pollution, and support cutting-edge science.



Patrick Haluska collects a water sample from the Columbia at Rooster Rock State.

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