



Demand Government Cleanup at Columbia River Toxic Cleanup Site

People want to feed their families locally-caught fish from one of the most popular recreational fishing areas in the Mid-Columbia—but the Oregon and Washington health departments warn the resident fish are too toxic to eat.¹

For over 40 years, the U.S. government dumped toxic pollution in and along the Columbia's shorelines at Bradford Island, located within the Bonneville Dam complex in Multnomah County, Oregon.

The area is a historical tribal fishing area. And today tribal people and diverse communities use the area for subsistence and recreational fishing—despite advisories warning not to eat resident fish.

Why should I care?

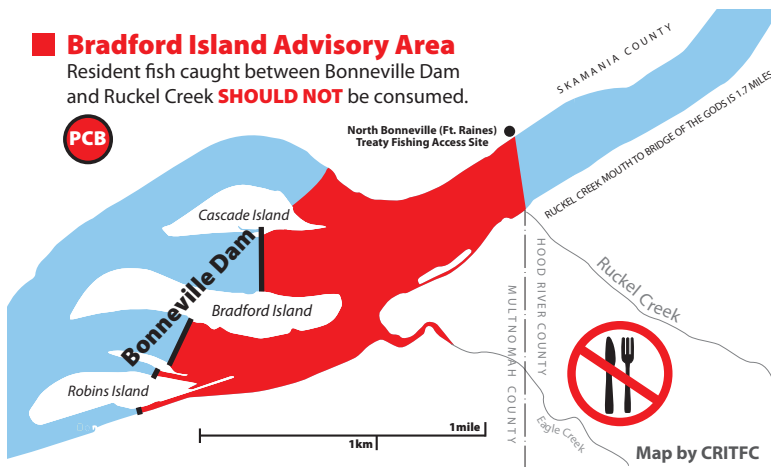
Decades of pollution—and languishing cleanup—threatens people's health, fish, and wildlife. And pollution along the Columbia River has a disproportionate impact on people of color. For example, studies show that Native Americans in the Columbia Basin eat significantly more locally-caught fish and shellfish than non-tribal members.³ According to the Oregon and Washington's environmental agencies, recreational fishers may consume more fish than the general population, and some population groups consume especially large amounts of fish and shellfish as part of traditionally influenced diets, including Native Americans and Asian and Pacific Islanders.⁴

PCBs: A Public Health Threat

Resident fish caught upstream of Bonneville Dam near Bradford Island contain the highest levels of cancer-causing polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs) in the Northwest. Migrating fish, like salmon, steelhead, and shad, are considered safe to eat.



People fishing on Bradford Island below Bonneville Dam, a popular area to fish for shad, a migratory fish, and sturgeon, a resident fish. Photo by Columbia Riverkeeper.



"PCBs consumed at high levels can impact men and women of all ages. PCBs may cause a variety of health problems depending on the amount a person is exposed to. If a baby or fetus is exposed to high levels of PCBs while developing, the child may have lifelong learning and behavioral problems. PCBs may also affect the immune and reproductive systems and thyroid hormones. PCBs may cause cancer in people." - Oregon Health Authority²



Photo by Bonneville Power Administration

Yakama Nation: A Leader for Cleanup

For years, Yakama Nation has been a leader in the fight to clean up Bradford Island and other toxic sites along the Columbia River. Enrolled members of the Yakama Nation exercise Treaty-reserved rights at their usual and accustomed fishing places on the Columbia River and its tributaries including fishing sites near and at Bradford Island.

In 2014 the Yakama Nation sued the Corps, arguing that tribal members were not compensated for helping plan the cleanup of Bradford Island. "The Yakama Nation was forced to take the Corps to court to do what it should have done in the first place—pay for the tribe's costs and allow it a seat at the table to make critical decisions about cleanup that affect our treaty fishing rights," explains JoDe Goudy, chairman of the Yakama Nation. The court ruled in favor of Yakama Nation on several grounds and affirmed the Corps must reimburse the tribe for costs associated with cleanup.⁵

Who is responsible for the pollution and cleanup?

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), a federal agency.

What is the government doing to fix the problem?

Not enough. The Corps and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) have a voluntary cleanup agreement to evaluate and clean up various sources of contaminants on the island. The last time the Corps engaged in new cleanup: 2007. Subsequent reports and sampling concluded that PCB concentrations in resident fish remain extremely high.⁶ The area is also contaminated with lead, mercury, pesticides, and petroleum chemicals.

What happens next?

The Corps and DEQ plan to decide on critical upland cleanup actions in 2019 and 2020—and the public can weigh-in during public comment periods and at hearings. In future years, the Corps will make decisions about in-river cleanup.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

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ACT

Tell the Corps and DEQ
you support cleanup,
Visit bit.ly/CleanUpBradfordIsland

ENGAGE

Contact Ubaldo Hernández,
Community Organizer at
ubaldo@columbiariverkeeper.org
541.490.7722.

Columbia Riverkeeper thanks the East Multnomah County Soil and Water Conservation District Partners in Conservation Grant Program, the Spirit Mountain Community Fund, and the Oregon Community Foundation for supporting public engagement in Bradford Island cleanup.

¹ Oregon Health Authority Advisories, <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYENVIRONMENTS/RECREATION/FISHCONSUMPTION/Pages/Bonneville.aspx>; Yakama Nation Advisories, <http://yakamafish-nsn.gov/sites/default/files/BNV-mid-Columbia-advisories%5B2%5D.pdf>.

² Oregon Health Authority, Bonneville Dam Fish Advisory, <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/HEALTHYENVIRONMENTS/RECREATION/FISHCONSUMPTION/Pages/Bonneville.aspx>.

³ Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, A Fish Consumption Survey of the Umatilla, Nez Perce, Yakama, and Warm Springs of the Columbia River Basin (Oct. 1994), <https://www.critfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/94-3report.pdf>.

⁴ Washington Department of Ecology, Fish Consumption Rates: Technical Support Document: A review of data and information about fish consumption in Washington (Jan. 2013), <https://fortress.wa.gov/ecy/publications/documents/1209058.pdf>; Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Fish Consumption Rate Project Rulemaking and Public Input Process (2011), <https://www.oregon.gov/deq/FilterDocs/shhFacilitatorsReport.pdf>; see also Indian Country Today, Oregon sets highest fish consumption rate in U.S. based on peoples' higher rate (July 27, 2011).

⁵ The Oregonian, Army Corps ordered to pay Yakama for Bradford Island cleanup (Feb. 4, 2016), https://www.oregonlive.com/oregon-city/2016/02/army_corps_must_pay_yakama_nat.html

⁶ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bradford Island Cleanup, <https://www.nwp.usace.army.mil/bonneville/bradford-island/>.