

COLUMBIA

RIVERKEEPER®

Strategic Plan

2022 to 2024



We unite people to fight for clean water and the climate.

Photo by Rick Rappaport

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Values

Care

We care for ourselves, others, and the world around us.

Relationship building

Victories are built on strong, lasting, and reciprocal relationships with colleagues, partners, members, and decision-makers.

Equity and inclusion

We respect all people, regardless of color, ethnicity, place of origin, culture, language, age, sexuality, or gender.

Hope

We work and celebrate with creativity and optimism.

Honesty and integrity

We operate with honesty and integrity, balanced with compassion.

Vision

A Columbia River that unites people to fight for clean water, abundant fish and wildlife, and our climate.

Mission

Protect and restore the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean.



Photo by Modoc Stories

Goals

Improve water quality in the Columbia River Basin because: 1) people have a right to eat locally-caught fish, drink water and swim without fear of pollution; and 2) clean water and healthy ecosystems have intrinsic value.

Protect people's health, habitat, fish and wildlife from past, existing, and proposed

high-impact development, including fossil fuel developments.

Promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in environmental decisions and our own actions. This includes evaluating the impacts of our decisions on Tribal Nations, pursuing dialogue with Tribes, and, where appropriate, working in solidarity with Tribes to achieve common goals.

Combat climate change and other impacts of fossil fuel development by promoting clean energy and just transition from fossil fuels.

Inspire people to care for and use the Columbia River through science and hands-on opportunities to engage with and learn about the river.

Implement antiracist strategies and embrace the many ways environmentalism and social justice intersect. This includes sharing power, resources, and information to actively build capacity in environmental and social justice movements.

Pursue authentic engagement with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals and communities who are disproportionately impacted by water and air pollution.

How the Magic Happens



Photo by Power Past Fracked Gas

Columbia Riverkeeper works with people in dozens of communities—from rural to urban—who have the same goal of protecting clean water, fish, wildlife, and the places they love. Legal work makes a difference. But lawsuits alone do not create the change we need. Change comes when people organize and stand together for something they believe in. Power shifts when conversations around kitchen tables grow into successful campaigns.

We believe that how we do our work matters. We have earned a string of victories to protect clean water and the climate.

Our Approach

Partner deeply with Tribes

We work in solidarity with many Tribal Nations and the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. We encourage our members and supporters to learn about the rich, diverse cultures of Columbia Basin Tribes and Indigenous people, as well as unique aspects of individual Tribes' sovereignty and governments. Our approach: build and maintain relationships with Tribes by adding value through organizing, legal advocacy, and communications on issues of shared concern.

Engage in marginalized communities

We strategically work in communities with little established environmental presence, including rural communities the Columbia River estuary, central Washington, and eastern Oregon. We work with allies beyond environmental organizations, including farmers, rural landowners, labor unions, and health professionals.

Lift up local voices

We cultivate local leadership and engage deeply in communities. From phone banking to media training for activists, we care about local leaders.

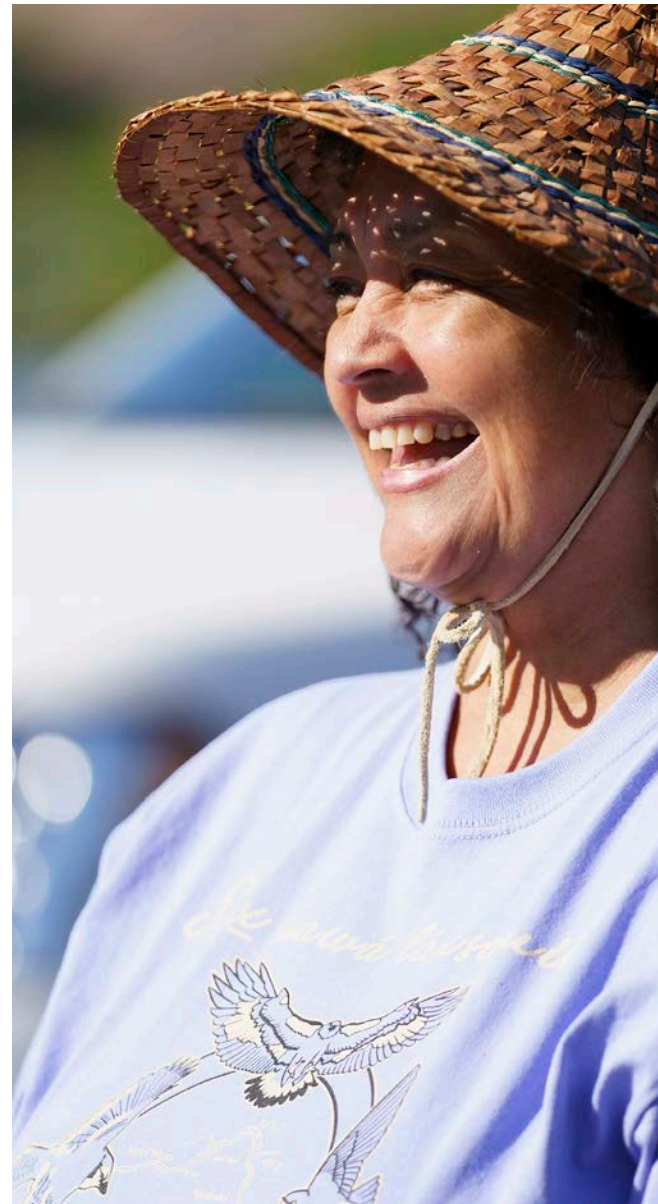


Photo by Sky Bear Media

Columbia Riverkeeper's Playbook

Like many sports, we work as a team every day—as a staff and board, with our members, and alongside community partners. But our work is no game. Columbia Riverkeeper engages in high-stakes campaigns. Will a small town get saddled with decades of cancer-causing toxic pollution from a fossil-fuel terminal? Will another population of Columbia River salmon go extinct in our lifetimes? We run creative plays—whether organizing in rural communities, arguing in court, or developing exposés in the media—to fight for clean water and the climate. Our playbook includes:

1. Grassroots community organizing

We work with impacted communities to: promote strategic action and build political strength; cultivate leadership; and learn from local knowledge.

2. Environmental education, science, and restoration

We educate and inspire people to learn about, monitor, and care for the Columbia.



Photo by Alex Milan Tracy

3. Legal work

We enforce environmental laws to: ensure local, state, and federal governments follow the law; reduce or eliminate illegal pollution; and increase government transparency.

4. Policy advocacy

We advocate to local, state, and federal agencies to adopt policies, make permitting decisions, and pass regulations to protect the environment, human health, and our climate.

5. Communications

We use online organizing and earned media to share stories and key values; inspire public participation; and inform decision makers, investors, and potential donors about our campaigns.



Photo by Modoc Stories

Strategic Program Priorities

Columbia Riverkeeper uses strategic coalition-building, grassroots organizing, strong policy work, and volunteers to protect clean water, the climate, and community health.

We have five primary program areas: Stopping Pollution; Fighting Fossil Fuels; Saving Salmon; Cleaning Up Hanford; and Engaging Communities. We are also the proud fiscal sponsor of *Comunidades*, a Latino/a/x-led group whose mission is to amplify voices for environmental and social justice while increasing Latino/a/x

engagement and leadership in Columbia River Gorge communities.

Our programs are powered by 16,000 members and supporters. Lasting, positive change happens when thousands of people pool their resources to fight the good fight. Our program work also benefits from the support of foundations and several state and federal grants.

Columbia Riverkeeper is committed to achieving our mission and vision by advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion

in environmental decisions and our own actions. In turn, our 2022–2024 Strategic Plan digs deeper to incorporate justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion principles at all levels of our organization, including: internal practices; program work; employee hiring, training, and retention and board recruitment and retention; membership outreach and development; and partnerships. We will make mistakes. If we take enough risks, we will fail sometimes. **Our commitments: Own it. Learn. Grow.**



Stopping Pollution

Our Goals

- Reduce toxic pollution so people can safely eat fish and other aquatic life in most locations on the Columbia River without toxic contamination
- Protect salmon and other fish and wildlife from toxic and other pollution
- Work with community members to advocate for clean drinking water

Lawsuits will stop pollution from flowing into the Columbia and its tributaries.

The Problem

Every person has the right to eat Columbia River fish and shellfish without fear of toxic pollutants. Today, this is not a reality. Thousands of pipes discharge pollution into the Columbia and its tributaries. This pollution includes metals and toxic substances that make parts of the Columbia unhealthy for fish and people. Pesticides and heavy metals enter the river from diffuse sources, such as agricultural runoff and air deposition. Pollution from former industrial sites also continues to leach into the river.

Toxic pollution accumulates to dangerous levels in the fish people eat—particularly resident fish like sturgeon and bass—and can cause cancer, birth defects, and serious illnesses. Studies demonstrate toxic pollution in Columbia River fish disproportionately impacts Native Americans and Asian/Pacific Islanders.

Pollution also harms salmon and other aquatic life in the Columbia River. Studies on the Columbia River have documented that many toxic contaminants are moving up the food chain and accumulating in the bodies of animals that eat fish.

In addition to surface-water pollution, groundwater pollution in the Columbia River basin is well documented and often has disproportionate impacts on BIPOC communities. This includes the groundwater pollution from agriculture—including factory farms—that disproportionately harms Indigenous and People of Color in the Lower Umatilla Groundwater Management Area in Morrow and Umatilla counties.



Our Plan

Enforce the Law

We will initiate, and resolve on favorable terms, at least 12 Clean Water Act enforcement lawsuits against companies or public entities that violate the law. These lawsuits will stop pollution from flowing into the Columbia and its tributaries. The lawsuits will also hold polluters accountable by requiring that they pay a penalty, which will go to a foundation to support Tribes and nonprofits working to protect and restore the river.

Hold the Government Accountable

We will work in solidarity with Yakama Nation to secure Superfund listing for Bradford Island and surrounding waters, located near Bonneville Dam, and engage impacted communities in the cleanup process if listed. We will also work with river communities to engage in government decision making, or spur government action, on toxic cleanup sites, such as the Goldendale Aluminum and Georgia-Pacific Washougal sites.

Stand Up to Factory Farms

We will work with coalition partners and the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) to stop new or expanded mega-dairies in Oregon and advocate for reforms to reduce air and water pollution. As part of our coalition work, we will work with community members in Umatilla and Morrow counties to advocate for state and federal action to address groundwater contamination in the Lower Umatilla Groundwater Management Area.

Challenge Pollution Loopholes

We will engage in government decision-making processes to improve water pollution discharge permits, policies, and rulemakings to reduce pollution. We will also work in solidarity with Tribes to continue legal challenges to Trump administration laws that gutted public health and clean water protections.



Fighting Fossil Fuels

Our Goals

- ◆ Protect the Columbia River and river communities from fossil fuel infrastructure by working in partnership with impacted communities and Tribal Nations
- ◆ Promote policies and legislation that restrict fossil fuel development in the Columbia River basin, including terminals, pipelines, and facilities that increase the region's dependence on fossil fuels
- ◆ Promote clean energy policies and legislation with a focus on opportunities to work in solidarity with Tribal Nations and BIPOC organizations and communities

The Problem

For nearly two decades, the Columbia faced an unprecedented number of coal, oil, and gas-shipping terminals, which threaten public health and safety, the river, and our climate. Pollution from fossil fuel facilities often disproportionately impacts Tribal Nations and BIPOC, low-income, and rural communities. Investing in long-term fossil fuel infrastructure impedes our progress toward renewable energy and clean fuels. Thanks to our incredible members and partners, we have had great success. But our work is not done.

The 2022 - 2024 Strategic Plan takes on the fracked gas and oil industries. Fracked gas, also called “natural gas,” is 90 percent methane. Methane is an extremely potent greenhouse gas. Recent scientific studies show that the climate impact of fracked gas is nearly as bad as coal—or perhaps even worse. This is because methane leaks directly into the atmosphere during fracking and transportation. The fracked gas industry plans a stunning increase in fracked gas infrastructure and consumption in Washington and Oregon. This includes fracked-gas-to-methanol refineries, new pipelines, and power plants. Stopping the nation’s largest new methane users is an important step to fight climate change.

The oil industry also sees dollar signs when it comes to the Columbia River. Oil companies jumped on a truly dangerous idea: send crude-oil in trains along the Columbia River to West Coast shipping ports, where oil supertankers would sail through the estuary to the Pacific Ocean. What could go wrong? Tesoro planned to build the nation’s largest oil-by-rail terminal in

We will play a leadership role in community organizing, legal, and communications to stop the proposed fossil fuel infrastructure.

Vancouver, Wash., to ship 360,000 barrels of explosive Bakken crude or tar sands oil each day. We celebrated a major victory in 2018 when Governor Inslee rejected this climate-wrecking project. Meanwhile, Zenith Energy started shipping crude and tar sands oil in Portland, OR. Our plan: work with Tribes and people who care about their communities and the Columbia to challenge the fossil fuel industry and protect what we love.

Photo by Kate Murphy





Photo by The Columbian

We will work in solidarity with Tribal Nations to ensure the disproportionate impacts of clean energy development and transmission are considered in decision making.

Our Plan

Advocate for Climate Action in River Communities

In collaboration with community members, we will advocate for the City of Vancouver to adopt a permanent fossil fuel infrastructure ordinance and ensure implementation of the Portland Fossil Fuel Ordinance

Challenge Claims about Alleged Clean Energy

We will engage on alleged fossil fuel replacement projects, such as NEXT Energy's renewable diesel refinery, with significant potential impacts to climate, habitat, and risk of conversion to fossil fuels.

Stop Fracked Gas Infrastructure

We will work with impacted community members to stop the proposed Port Westward fracked-gas-to-methanol refinery and prevent new gas power plants, including the proposed Perennial Power Plant. We will also play a leadership role in community organizing, legal, and communications to stop the proposed GTN gas-pipeline expansion, an existing fracked gas pipeline through Washington, Idaho, Oregon, and California.

Stand Up to Oil

We will watchdog the Global Partners terminal and stop expansion of oil-by-rail if a proposal arises. We will also defend the City of Portland's decision rejecting oil operations at Zenith Energy and continue to engage in the regional Stand Up to Oil coalition.

Support Just Transition Clean Energy Policies

We will work in solidarity with Tribal Nations to ensure the disproportionate impacts of clean energy development and transmission are considered in decision making, including anticipated legislation in Oregon and Washington.

Fossil Fuel Projects Defeated on the Lower Columbia



Columbia Riverkeeper partnered with community groups, Tribal Nations, and local businesses to defeat over a dozen coal export, oil-by-rail, and fracked gas terminals and pipelines. Our momentum is strong, but big threats remain.



Saving Salmon



Photo by Lance Koudele

Our Goals

Healthy and recovery populations of salmon and steelhead, and recovery of orcas

Work in solidarity with Tribes to support Tribal Nations' rights to harvestable salmon runs and meaningful input in regional decisions about salmon recovery and management

Improve public understanding of leading causes of salmon declines, including combating the racist narrative of Tribal fishing as a leading cause of the extinction crisis

The Problem

The Columbia once produced more salmon than any river on Earth. An estimated 16 million salmon returned to the Columbia from the ocean each year, and Indigenous people sustainably harvested these salmon since time immemorial. The Columbia still supports important subsistence, commercial, and recreational salmon fisheries. Columbia River salmon are also food for critically endangered Southern Resident orcas and other wildlife.

Today, Columbia River salmon populations are a fraction of their historic size. The U.S. government eradicated salmon from many parts of the Columbia basin by constructing Grand Coulee, Hells Canyon, and many other dams. Even dams that allow fish migration can take a heavy toll on salmon by damaging habitat and making the water too hot. Despite the dams and other threats, some Columbia River salmon still survive, although many populations are close to extinction.

Our Plan

Advocate for Lower Snake River Dam Removal

The situation is dire. Snake River salmon and Southern Resident orcas are close to extinction—and the people and cultures that rely on them are suffering. We will work with Tribes and partners to convince the federal government to remove the four Lower Snake River dams. As a region, we must unite around solutions to remove the four Lower Snake River Dams and re-invest in regional transportation, irrigation, and energy

infrastructure. Working together, we can have a future that includes salmon, agriculture, and clean energy.

Restore Cold Water

Through strategic media, inspiring events, and litigation, we will sound the alarm on the hot-water crisis on the Columbia. This includes using the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act, and Clean Water Act to force federal agencies to address temperature impacts on adult salmon migration.

Protect Important Estuary Habitat from Industrialization

Recognized as an Estuary of National Significance, the Columbia River estuary is home to some of the most important salmon habitat in the world. We will work with Tribes and river communities to engage in important decisions that will impact the estuary's health for generations, including proposals to build massive new heavy-industrial ports in Columbia County, OR, and Cowlitz County, WA.



Photo by Alex Milan Tracy

We will work in solidarity with the Cowlitz Tribe and Yakama Nation to advocate for completion of fish passage throughout the Lewis River basin.

Work in Solidarity with Tribes for Lewis River Fish Passage

The Lewis River basin is famous for salmon, stunning waterfalls, big trees, blurry bigfoot sightings, and hydroelectric power. On its way to the mighty Columbia, the Lewis River flows through three large reservoirs: Yale, Swift, and Merlin. These reservoirs provide electricity and recreational opportunities. But the dams also stop Lewis River salmon and steelhead from reaching their native spawning streams. We will work in solidarity with the Cowlitz Tribe and Yakama Nation to advocate for completion of fish passage throughout the Lewis River basin.

Stop the Destruction of a Sacred Site

For centuries, Yakama ancestors, and current-day descendants, use the area known indigenously as Pushpum to gather foods and medicines that are honored through annual ceremonies. The site is remembered in Yakama legend as a place of refuge for the members of Kah-milt-pa, or the Rock Creek Band. Multiple Tribes consider the area sacred. If built, a proposed pumped-storage hydropower development will excavate and blast nine archaeological sites for the purpose of creating 124 acres of new reservoir surface area. The reservoirs and associated infrastructure will destroy Tribal cultural and religious resources, threaten wildlife, and impact wetlands, streams, and groundwater. We will work in solidarity with the Yakama and other Tribal Nations to convince decision makers to honor Treaty rights and consider environmental justice. This destructive proposal cannot go forward.



Cleaning Up Hanford

Our Goals

- Hold the U.S. government accountable for a Hanford cleanup that protects the Columbia River, people who are impacted by Hanford pollution, and the rights of Tribal Nations
- Work in solidarity with Yakama Nation, including supporting an outreach position at the Tribe, and increase solidarity work with Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation, Nez Perce, and Warm Springs
- Increase outreach and engagement of Latina/o/x communities impacted by Hanford's nuclear legacy

We will tell the story of Hanford from different perspectives using an environmental justice lens.

The Problem

The Columbia River runs along the Hanford Nuclear Site, home to some of the most dangerous pollution on Earth. A legacy of World War II and the Cold War, the federal government selected Hanford as a top-secret site for the Manhattan Project, which called for enriching plutonium for nuclear weapons. The 586-square-mile Hanford Site rests on the ceded lands of multiple Tribal Nations. Today, Tribes and Indigenous people are leading the effort to hold the U.S. government accountable for cleanup.

Radioactive and toxic pollution from Hanford threatens people's health, salmon, and water quality. The stark reality: contamination from Hanford still reaches the Columbia River. Without effective cleanup, more pollution threatens to escape into the environment in the coming decades. For example, at Hanford, cancer-causing strontium-90 levels in groundwater near the Columbia are 2000 times above the drinking water standard. Radiation levels in soils are lethally dangerous just a few hundred yards from the Columbia. Cleanup along the Columbia remains far from complete.



Photo by Sky Bear Media

Our Plan

Work in solidarity with Tribal Nations to stop proposals to build new nuclear reactors at Hanford.

Advocate for strong River Corridor cleanup plans and challenge plans that fail to protect people's health and the river.

Speak up for thorough cleanup and transparency at Hanford, including identification and remediation of aging, high-hazard facilities on the site that are at risk of failure.

Convince the U.S. Department of Energy to abandon its proposal to reclassify high-level waste at Hanford and hold the U.S. Department of Energy accountable to the Tri-Party Agreement.

Implement communications and outreach strategies that are accessible, including Spanish translation, and provide compelling visuals that tell the story of the people and places impacted by Hanford and cleanup decisions.

Press agencies to hold meetings and hearings outside of the Tri-Cities to engage a broader cross-section of the Pacific Northwest in Hanford cleanup.

Build and maintain relationships with Latina/o/x communities, with a particular focus on the Yakama Nation Reservation, Yakima, and Tri-Cities, to improve outreach and engagement on Hanford and work in solidarity on select social justice issues.

Tell the story of Hanford from different perspectives using an environmental justice lens. This includes engaging people to speak about the risks of Hanford's pollution to people who live, fish, and otherwise use the Columbia near Hanford.



Engaging Communities

The Problem

The pandemic disconnected people from their communities, and in some cases the Columbia River. Across all of our program areas, Columbia Riverkeeper engages communities. The Engaging Communities program aims to connect people to the river and celebrate the diverse, vibrant cultures within river communities. This includes monitoring the river to give people the confidence to swim when and where it is safe. The reality: government agencies don't routinely monitor water quality in the Columbia—let alone make data easily accessible to people in multiple languages. With access to water quality data and culturally-informed messaging, people can make choices to use the river—and get inspired to fight for clean water.

We will provide free bilingual (Spanish and English), hands-on environmental education programming to 700 youth and young adults from Gorge schools at the Nichols Natural Area in Hood River, OR.

Our Goals

◆ Listen to the wisdom of diverse people who love and rely on the Columbia

◆ Engage and inspire people to care about the Columbia River, clean water, salmon and other species, and people who rely on locally-caught fish

◆ Build and maintain relationships with Latina/o/x communities, with a particular focus on the Columbia Gorge, to improve outreach and engagement on river issues and work in solidarity on select social justice issues

◆ Encourage active fishing and swimming in the Columbia and tributaries by collecting and sharing results from *E. coli* (bacteria) and harmful algal bloom monitoring in Portland and the Gorge.

◆ Use the Nichols Natural Area to create a high-quality, high-profile restoration and environmental education project while focusing on leadership and engagement that represents the people of the Gorge

Photo by Jamie Lyn



Our Plan

Latina/o/x Environmental Justice Engagement

- Authentic outreach to Latina/o/xs in the Gorge on clean water and climate issues.
- Promote community conversation, engagement and share information through our bilingual (Spanish and English) "Conoce tu Columbia" radio show and podcast.

Water Quality Monitoring

- Monitor 20 Columbia River and tributary beaches and share information on Swim Guide in multiple languages.
- Launch a harmful algal bloom visual monitoring project; evaluate additional monitoring; and increase public awareness and policy solutions.
- Investigate strategic opportunities to monitor conventional or toxic pollutants.

Columbia Gorge Pollution Prevention and Education and Outreach Project

- Provide free bilingual (Spanish and English), hands-on environmental education programming to 700 youth and young adults from Gorge schools at the Nichols Natural Area in Hood River, OR.
- Host pollution education and prevention webinars, events and associated social and earned media outreach.
- Update and expand our online middle-school curriculum, which offers easy-to-implement science units that tackle important environmental issues and inspire action by empowering students with the tools to think critically.
- Create a welcoming space along the Columbia for families and all community members to be part of the collective effort to restore the Nichols Natural Area and interact.
- Create bilingual pollution education outreach materials (fact sheets, emails, social media) to connect people to the river and emerging science on how pollution impacts people, water, and fish.



Photo by Paloma Ayala

Fight for What You Love

**Columbia Riverkeeper unites communities to
fight for clean water and our climate—and win.**

Launched in 2000, we have grown into a diverse, respected organization known for combining grassroots organizing and legal advocacy to secure victories for clean water, salmon recovery, and our climate.

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