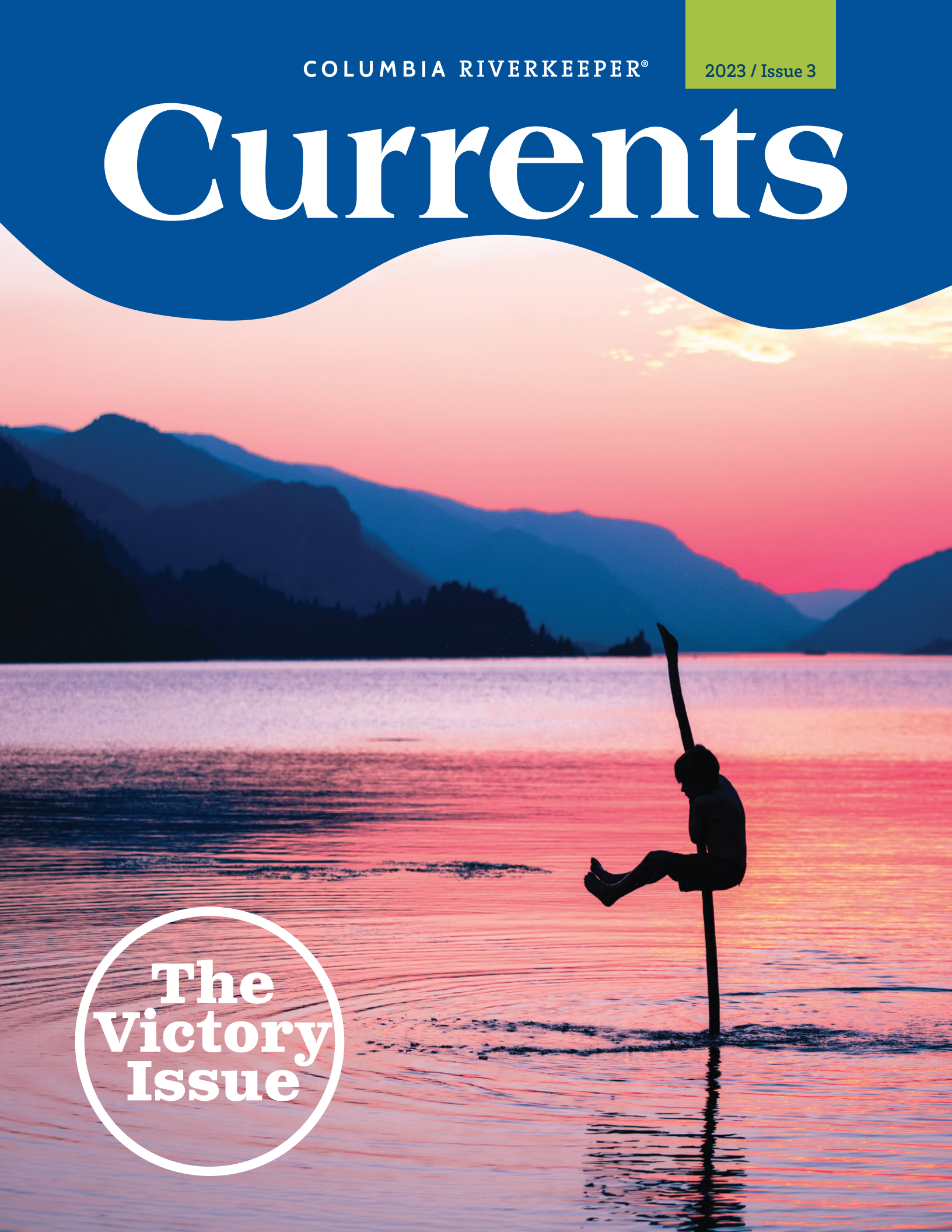


COLUMBIA RIVERKEEPER®

2023 / Issue 3

Currents



**The
Victory
Issue**



Columbia Riverkeeper protects and restores the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean.

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From the first time I learned about Columbia Riverkeeper in my early days of law school, I was drawn to the organization's passion for justice.



For the River

*Front cover: A child playing on the Columbia River at sunset. Photo by Paloma Ayala.
This page: As part of Investigate West's exposé on energy projects threatening the Columbia, Executive Director Lauren Goldberg was delighted to spend an evening gazing at the Columbia (though her family is still teasing her about this photo). Photo by Leah Nash.
Back cover: Illustration by Marcella Kriebel.
Graphic Design by Melissa Delzio.*

What draws you to Columbia Riverkeeper? For me, the list runs long. (I began volunteering at Columbia Riverkeeper as a legal intern 18 years ago!) But it starts with my kids and my commitment to fight for justice.

My kids love playing in the Columbia River. Swimming. Fishing. Burying each other in the sand. After my older daughter, Talia, caught her first spring Chinook, she could hardly spit out the story to her grandparents; she was literally shaking with excitement. That's why we do this work. For all the kids who just want to go fishing and dunk each other in the Columbia. For a river that nourishes and unites us.

From the first time I learned about Columbia Riverkeeper in my early days of law school, I was drawn to the organization's passion for justice. This includes a deep, abiding belief that working in solidarity with Tribes and Indigenous people matters if you call the Columbia home. Columbia Riverkeeper's commitment to engaging with Tribes—both stepping up and stepping back—is inextricably tied to our success protecting clean water, fighting for strong salmon runs, and stopping dirty fossil fuels.

What keeps you partnering with Columbia Riverkeeper? For many, it's impact. The organization punches above its weight, year after year, delivering big wins for clean water, salmon, and our climate. In 2023, Columbia Riverkeeper celebrated another year of victories and important progress in underdog fights. **You make these victories possible.**

- You stopped years of illegal toxic pollution at one of the largest ports in the Pacific Northwest, the Port of Vancouver USA, by enforcing the law and holding the port accountable.
- You worked with Tribes to secure a fish passage agreement at dams on an important tributary of the Columbia, the Lewis River.
- You stalled a proposal for a massive non-conventional diesel refinery in the heart of the Columbia River Estuary. No, the developers haven't thrown in the towel, but we know from experience that big victories follow years of smaller victories.

As a Columbia Riverkeeper supporter, those are just three of your many accomplishments in 2023. Turn the page for highlights from our five program areas that showcase a year of big wins for clean water and our climate. Let's keep fighting for what we love. Thank you for partnering with our talented staff and knowledgeable board to make a difference for the lifeblood of the Pacific Northwest.

Onward,

Lauren

Lauren Goldberg, *Executive Director*

Your Impact in 2023

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

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

Our Commitment

Embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion at every level of our work. Communities are the backbone of what we do. As an organization that advocates for the health and safety of river communities, we must fight for social justice and take a stand against racism.

Columbia Riverkeeper earned the highest ratings for top charity guides



Four stars = Exceptional. Exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in its cause



Platinum = Highest Seal of Transparency.



Fighting Fossil Fuels

9 members of Congress and thousands of people urged the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission to deny TC Energy's massive GTN Xpress fracked gas pipeline expansion, in response to incredible political strategizing and community organizing.

200 people participated in the Land and Water Day of Action against fossil fuels in Portland, organized by Columbia Riverkeeper and partners.

5 years and counting is how far NEXT Energy has fallen behind schedule in its plans to build a non-conventional diesel refinery in the Columbia River Estuary. Why? Columbia Riverkeeper and community members have won a legal challenge and disclosed the plan's massive climate and water quality impacts, leading to permit delays and withdrawals.



Stopping Pollution

6 Clean Water Act lawsuits prosecuted and settled in 2023, which will prevent a whole lot of toxic and other pollution from flowing into the Columbia River.

\$25 million the Port of Vancouver USA will spend to reduce toxic copper pollution that would otherwise flow into the Columbia under a legal settlement with Columbia Riverkeeper.

\$780,000+ paid by polluters in penalties to Tribes and nonprofit organizations as a result of our 2023 lawsuit settlements.

3 years to prevail in a court appeal brought by Earthjustice on behalf of Tribes, Columbia Riverkeeper, and Sierra Club to overturn a Trump-era rule gutting Clean Water Act protections.



Engaging Communities

240 water quality samples collected at Columbia River beaches.

650+ kids and young adults who experienced bilingual (English and Spanish) environmental education through Columbia Riverkeeper's outreach program.

30+ events Columbia Riverkeeper hosted or partnered in to inspire people in Columbia River communities to speak up for clean water, salmon, and our climate.

1400+ pounds of garbage volunteers collected at community cleanup events along the Columbia.



Cleaning Up Hanford

70 students from the Yakama Nation Tribal School and Heritage University who participated in a one-of-a-kind school trip (featured on National Public Radio!), organized by Columbia Riverkeeper and Yakama Nation, to tour the Hanford Nuclear Site.

750+ Columbia Riverkeeper members and supporters who advocated for improvements to the U.S. Dept. of Energy's proposed Hanford Nuclear Site cleanup plans.

500+ people who explored Columbia Riverkeeper's "Water's Walk Through Hanford" storymap that creatively explains the toxic and radioactive contamination threatening the Columbia.



Saving Salmon

10 dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers that, after years of strategic litigation, finally have Clean Water Act discharge permits to reduce impacts on water quality.

4 Endangered Species Act-listed fish species in the Lewis River, an important Columbia tributary, that will benefit from PacifiCorp building fish passage at old dams, thanks to advocacy by Tribes and allies.

2 Tribes and 6 fish advocacy groups partnering with Columbia Riverkeeper to sue the state of Oregon for weakening protections for migratory fish like salmon, steelhead, and lamprey.

Columbia Riverkeeper's successful formula: combine strategic legal advocacy with community organizing and creative communications. We work in solidarity with Tribes, partner with people who live and work along the Columbia, and celebrate the impact of people coming to together to fight for what they love. Here are a few of the year's highlights by the numbers.

Top photo: Boats congregate to land a prized Columbia River salmon. Photo by Paloma Ayala.

Building on Climate Victories



By Audrey Leonard,
Staff Attorney

The last year has been a whirlwind. When I joined Columbia Riverkeeper in July 2022, I knew I was joining a team of strategic and creative advocates. What has continued to impress me: the tenacity of the communities we work with to fight for a livable climate in the Pacific Northwest.

Our region has seen countless fossil fuel proposals. Together with fire-fighters, fishers, foresters, farmers, health professionals, educators, union leaders, and Tribes, Columbia Riverkeeper and our partners have stopped more than a dozen proposed fossil fuel facilities, ranging from coal exports to LNG terminals. Working alongside and amplifying those voices is what makes my job on the Fighting Fossil Fuels program team so much more than just being a lawyer.

A New Landscape

In the wake of over 15 years of successes defeating fossil fuel

infrastructure projects, the industry has shifted tactics. Now, we're seeing more proposals to expand existing infrastructure—like pipelines, refineries, and waterfront-industrial terminals—rather than build new facilities. Why? Existing infrastructure typically has some of the required permits, and regulators often approve capacity expansions even where they might reject a new project.

In this changing landscape, Columbia Riverkeeper has adapted quickly to keep fossil fuels in the ground and out of communities.

A prime example: the GTN Xpress Pipeline, a proposal to

increase the amount of fracked gas flowing through the existing 1,354-mile interstate Gas Transmission Northwest (GTN) pipeline. The project would push more fracked gas through the GTN pipeline, resulting in over 3.47 million tons of greenhouse gas pollution every year. GTN Xpress is also a dirty deal for ratepayers and communities near the pipeline.

Columbia Riverkeeper plays a central role in elevating the GTN Xpress Pipeline fight regionally and nationally, including fiscally-sponsoring a grassroots coalition. Alongside community members, over 50 local and national organizations, and the coalition, we helped turn an under-the-radar proposal into a high-profile national climate issue. To date, the project is opposed by nine members of Congress; the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission; the attorneys general of Washington, Oregon, and California; and Governors Inslee and Kotek. On October 19, 2023, FERC approved



In June, activists gathered in Portland at the Land and Water Rally Day of Action against fossil fuels. Photo by Alex Milan Tracy.

TC Energy's proposal. We're not giving up. In 2024, Columbia Riverkeeper will continue to fight this dangerous proposal in court and beyond.

Digging Deep on Alleged Climate Solutions

Many fossil fuel industry players claim that "renewable fuels" are the answer to our problems. It turns out that not all "renewable fuels" advance climate action. Columbia Riverkeeper is committed to uncovering greenwashing from corporations that value profits over actual environmental progress and fighting projects that will do more harm than good. Two prominent examples: NEXT Renewable Fuels' proposed non-conventional diesel refinery in Columbia County, OR, and the Zenith oil-by-rail terminal in Portland, OR.

NEXT Renewable Fuels

Columbia County, OR
The company's proposed gas-fired refinery would emit over 1 million

tons of greenhouse gas pollution each year and displace 140 acres of wetlands in the Columbia River Estuary. The good news: NEXT has yet to secure several key permits. In 2024, we will submit detailed comments on NEXT's environmental impact statement and continue supporting community organizing.

Zenith Energy

Portland, OR
The saga continues. Columbia Riverkeeper and incredible local organizations and community partners have been fighting the Zenith oil-by-rail facility for years. Initially, we won: the City of Portland denied a key land use permit. Zenith appealed. Lower courts ruled in the city's favor—and then the city struck a deal with Zenith, approving five more years of dangerous oil operations in exchange for a promise to switch to "renewable" fuels. Fast forward to today: Columbia Riverkeeper continues to advocate for the city

Alongside community members, over 50 local and national organizations, and the coalition, we helped turn an under-the-radar proposal into a high-profile national climate issue.

to take a stand against Zenith's proposed expansion under the guise of "renewables."

In 2024, we will continue to take a hard look at industry proposals with alleged climate benefits and weigh in when the promises don't hold up to scrutiny.

Change for the Long Haul

This year, Columbia Riverkeeper's *Fighting Fossil Fuels* program also built on important victories to protect our climate at the local and state levels, including advocacy at the Oregon Public Utility Commission, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission, and in river communities. Case in point: We celebrated a major victory this fall when the Oregon Land Use Board of Appeals upheld the City of Portland's zoning ordinance banning new bulk fossil fuel facilities. Columbia Riverkeeper intervened to support the city's ordinance against an industry challenge, represented by the amazing team at Crag Law Center. This is a huge win for public health and safety.

It is an honor to be a climate advocate on Columbia Riverkeeper's team. Each new challenge is an opportunity to create a better future. I hope you'll join me in finding inspiration in the victories we share along the way. ☪



Restoring Rights to Clean Water



By Kelly Campbell,
Policy Director

Standing on the banks of the Columbia River this fall near the Bradford Island Superfund site, I could envision a future in which we will no longer need to warn people fishing here about which fish they should avoid bringing home to feed their families. By pursuing smart litigation, passing protective laws, engaging communities, and pressuring sluggish agencies and dirty industries, Columbia Riverkeeper’s *Stopping Pollution* program creates tangible changes for clean water, including at the Columbia’s newest Superfund site.

Prevent Industrial Pollution

Columbia Riverkeeper scored major victories for clean water, healthy fish, and river communities this year. For over two decades, the organization has used the Clean Water Act to hold polluters accountable to protect our collective right to clean, safe rivers.

In 2023, our legal team, with incredible support from outside counsel at Kampmeier & Knutsen PLLC and Smith & Lowney PLLC, prosecuted six Clean Water Act enforcement cases. For example, this September we won a huge victory for clean water and salmon when the Port of Vancouver USA agreed to settle our lawsuit. Available information, including the port’s water quality sampling data, suggest that the port is the single largest industrial source of unhealthy copper levels in the lower Columbia River over the last decade. Even in low concentrations, copper is extremely toxic to salmon. Under the terms of the agreement, the port will spend more than \$25 million to install new equipment to prevent copper from getting into the river and poisoning fish. It will also pay \$500,000 to the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board and \$150,000 to improve water quality in Vancouver Lake, which has been dogged by persistent toxic algal blooms.

Columbia Riverkeeper also built on over a decade of legal advocacy to reduce pollution from dams. Big dams routinely pollute the water by releasing oil into the Snake and Columbia rivers. Dams also cause heat

Top photo: Swimmers in the Columbia River. Photo by Paloma Ayala.

pollution, which is lethal for salmon and other fish. For over a decade, Columbia Riverkeeper has been litigating to make sure that the Clean Water Act applies to federal dams. This year we scored a big win on the Lower Snake and Columbia rivers, ensuring all 10 dams will be held accountable to federal Clean Water Act standards that reduce illegal pollution.

Stop Factory Farm Pollution

As a founding member of the Stand Up to Factory Farms Coalition, Columbia Riverkeeper advocated in the Oregon legislature in 2023 for a moratorium on factory farms that pollute groundwater and rivers. Although the final version of the bill did not go far enough, it did put a cap on water use, which helped to halt plans to construct two massive chicken factory farms in the Willamette Valley. With our partners, we’ll build on this momentum to continue protecting water and Columbia River communities from polluting factory farms.

Clean up Toxic Waste Dump

Last year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) listened to calls for environmental justice on the Columbia by designating Bradford Island and surrounding waters near the Bonneville Dam a Superfund site. This year, from Columbia Riverkeeper’s seat on the Restoration Advisory Board, Community Organizer Kate Murphy has been putting pressure on the federal government to move the cleanup process at Bradford

Island and surrounding waters forward. Columbia Riverkeeper also created easy-to-understand fish advisories in English and Spanish to inform fishers in the area about which fish are safe to bring home to their families.

Keep up the Momentum

As we head into 2024, it brings me hope that Columbia Riverkeeper’s ongoing work stopping pollution is making real progress to restore clean water and healthy fish for everyone that relies on the mighty Columbia. 🌊

Columbia Riverkeeper is an established and trusted leader working to create a more just system for ecosystems, and the people who rely on them throughout the Columbia River Basin.

Se-ah-dom Edmo, Executive Director of Seeding Justice



SPOTLIGHT

Seeding Justice

In 2021, Columbia Riverkeeper established the Columbia River Restoration Fund (CRRF) at Seeding Justice, an Oregon-based foundation. When Columbia Riverkeeper settles a Clean Water Act lawsuit, the defendant must pay a penalty. In many cases, Columbia Riverkeeper negotiates to direct the funds to the CRRF; Seeding Justice then oversees the competitive grantmaking process for projects that benefit the Columbia.

“Columbia Riverkeeper is an established and trusted leader working to create a more just system for ecosystems, and the people who rely on them throughout the Columbia River Basin,” said Se-ah-dom Edmo (Shoshone-Bannock, Nez Perce, and Yakama), executive director of Seeding Justice. “Our team was excited to launch this place-based fund to support visionary Tribes and nonprofits as they embark on projects to protect everyone who relies on locally caught fish and clean water.”

The fund has grown to a whopping \$2,373,500. In early 2024, Seeding Justice will launch its first grantmaking cycle, seeking applications from Tribes and nonprofits for projects that restore, protect, and maintain the Columbia River and its tributaries.

Learn more:

www.SeedingJustice.org/Community-Funds

Top right photo: Seeding Justice Executive Director Se-ah-dom Edmo. Photo courtesy of Seeding Justice.

Inspiring a Love for the Columbia



By Lorri Epstein, Water Quality Director

Our Community Programs Promote Education, Action, and Connection

“WOK-WOK!
WOK- WOK!”
It’s the call of the black crowned night heron, known to roost near the Nichols Natural Area. But this time the call isn’t coming from a bird. It’s coming from a second-grade student named Olivia who has adopted the role of a heron.

She is excitedly asking me for a fish (in this case represented by a Cheerio) to take back to her well-camouflaged nest while vigilantly dodging predators, played by classmates Xavier and Rosie. Olivia is one of 650 students who visited the Nichols Natural Area with Columbia Riverkeeper this year. Through the Engaging Communities program, students learned about restoration, water quality, riparian ecosystems, and the species, like black crowned night herons, that rely on this habitat.

“Kids make the best scientists.” That’s the secret I whisper as the students lean in close. Who, if anyone, is more curious and experimental than a kid in the outdoors? Columbia Riverkeeper programs help them hone their skills, learn new tools, and discover deep connections. Students learn to make observations, tap into their natural curiosity, and learn about all the ways riparian ecosystems support the river and the life connected to it. At the Nichols Natural Area, kids and young adults aren’t confined by classroom walls. The learning happens through fun games, hands-on activities, and the occasional bird-based role play.

“Columbia Riverkeeper’s educational work at Nichols Natural Area provides a wonderfully engaging opportunity for site-based, relevant education for our elementary-aged students,” explains second-grade teacher Joelena Evans. “Our students learn about the habitat as well as their role in helping to preserve it. This is an area that our students may recreate near regularly, so [Columbia Riverkeeper’s] education makes it all the more relevant to them.”

Middle School teacher Adam Smith echoes, “Riverkeeper’s work, not only on the river but within classrooms, is critical to fostering healthy ecosystems and communities. Their curriculum has been super helpful—place-based, connected to standards, and accessible to my students.”

Through the Engaging Communities program, the team at Columbia Riverkeeper aims to connect people to the river and celebrate the diverse, vibrant cultures within river communities. This includes community events and programs at the Nichols Natural Area, as well as in-person and online education. Over the last five years, Columbia Riverkeeper has continued to expand our relationship-building efforts to Latina/o/x communities with culturally specific outreach and engagement, producing bilingual radio shows and the podcast *Conoce Tu Columbia* (Know Your Columbia) on environmental and social justice issues, and providing additional materials in Spanish.

Columbia Riverkeeper also monitors the river to give people the confidence to swim. This year



SPOTLIGHT

Alonso Castillo

Meet Alonso Castillo, age 17, a Hood River High School senior. For the last two summers, Alonso participated in The Next Door Inc.’s Summer Youth Employment Program.

“My experience was amazing, I did it two years in a row,” said Alonso. “It was a good program. It shows you a lot of good knowledge of how to use different tools., Plus, you get to know cool people there, people you wouldn’t normally talk to at school or different places.” Over the years, Columbia Riverkeeper has teamed up with the Youth Employment Program engaging students to support restoration at the Nichols Natural Area conservation easement located on the Hood River waterfront. The program includes teens from Hood River and Wasco counties, giving youth on-the-ground work skills with an emphasis on outdoor education and natural resource management.

The transformation of students and the Nichols site during the summer is pretty stunning. Students learn new skills while keeping spotted knapweed and blackberries at bay, allowing space for trees and new friendships to thrive.

Alonso will be attending Mt. Hood Community College to study engineering next fall. “I was thinking about being a park ranger and hopefully those skills from this experience will help,” he shared.


Top right photo: Alonso Castillo, past participant, The Next Door Inc. Summer Youth Employment Program. Photo courtesy of Alonso.

“Riverkeeper’s work ... is critical to fostering healthy ecosystems and communities. Their curriculum has been super helpful—place-based, connected to standards, and accessible to my students.”

Adam Smith, Hood River Middle School teacher

marked the 17th season of bacteria testing to help keep you and your family safe. Government agencies don’t routinely monitor water quality in the Columbia—let alone make data easily accessible to people in multiple languages. Columbia Riverkeeper provides access to water quality data and culturally informed messaging, so people can make choices to use the river—and get inspired to fight for clean water.

This year, Columbia Riverkeeper’s paid summer interns collected 240 samples and a remarkable 98 percent were within the safe limits for E. coli bacteria. These exceptional results are welcome news for everyone who likes to swim, splash, play, and relax on the river. But it’s not only about bacteria levels regarding recreation. Our team tests water quality, investigates pollution, monitors for toxic algae, and arms the public with the data and information to stay safe and hold polluters accountable.

With your support, Columbia Riverkeeper will continue to engage communities with opportunities for education, action, and connection. 

Top photo: Lorri leads a school presentation at Columbia Riverkeeper’s Nichols Natural Area. Photo by Noah Noteboom.



A Program of Eternal Hope

Uniting People to Hold the Government Accountable for Hanford Cleanup



By Simone Anter,
Staff Attorney

Above photo: A view of the Columbia River's scenic Hanford Reach.
Photo to right: Trina Sherwood, cultural specialist for the Yakama Nation Natural Resources Department, was one of the leaders who provided interpretation for students from the Tribal School during the Hanford tour.
Photos by David Moskowitz.

I recently visited Seattle for a legal conference on the state of Northwest fisheries. In between days focused on salmon recovery, Snake River dam removal, and orcas, I headed to Belltown, where I was thrilled to find a local ice cream favorite, Salt and Straw. (If you haven't been there I highly recommend it, especially for their decadent vegan options.) As I drove, narrowly missing several curbs as my focus was pulled every which way on the bustling streets, my goldfish-like attention caught something brilliant. Taking up an entire corner building was the local Patagonia store. Its many windows were hand-painted with the words, "We all live downriver from Hanford" (or something to that effect; remember, I was driving and shouldn't have been reading to begin with). I noticed a winding Columbia River and fish in the artwork. My heart skipped a beat. It was so important to see this reminder that we are all connected to the Hanford Nuclear Site and it was particularly moving to experience this awareness in another city. I later learned that one of our amazing partner organizations, Hanford Challenge, was responsible for the installation of this mural.

Columbia Riverkeeper's *Cleaning Up Hanford* program is one of eternal hope. Working on a cleanup with no end in a single lifetime presents unique challenges that our team grapples with every day. Radioactive and toxic pollution from Hanford threatens water quality, salmon and people's health. Contamination from Hanford still reaches the Columbia River. Without effective cleanup, more pollution threatens to escape into the environment in the coming decades. In 2023, Columbia Riverkeeper used public pressure, grassroots organizing, and technical assessment of cleanup plans to advocate for thorough, timely cleanup.

Some of our greatest triumphs? Together with Yakama Nation's Environmental Restoration/Waste Management (ERWM) program, we brought nearly 70 students from the Yakama Nation Tribal School to Hanford for a bus tour of their homeland. Guided by their Tribal leaders and elders, students were able to visit the place that their ancestors have visited and occupied since time immemorial to learn about the pollution and toxic legacy that they are inheriting. This uncanny field trip built on years of collaborative school presentations by ERWM and Columbia Riverkeeper to the Tribal School and other local schools around the Yakama Indian Reservation, an effort to prepare the next generation for the difficulties of Hanford.

Sharing these stories of triumph and resiliency pertaining to cleanup beyond the Tri-Cities and even Washington state is essential, because like the Patagonia mural, we are all downriver from Hanford. With this in mind, we secured regional and national NPR coverage of the field trip, so that even more individuals could hear about the importance of a proper cleanup from those most impacted. As climate change continues to alter the landscape—affecting groundwater levels, the position of the Columbia, the stability of aging infrastructure, and the federal budget—Hanford remains a threat to us all.

The night before the school trip, Columbia Riverkeeper Board President Emily Washines (Yakama) spoke to an audience of elected officials, Tribal members, reporters, and other Hanford cleanup advocates. "When I think about being able to speak for the resources, those not yet born, I



think about the people in this room," she shared. "I think about the messages that we carry... the messages that we give to our children and even other youth in the community about what we have to do. Because it's going to take all of us in order to make and restore this area and land again."

Holding the U.S. government accountable for effectively cleaning up the most toxic and radioactive place in America demands environmentalists, scientists, cultural resources experts, geologists, fisher people... the list goes on. But most importantly, the cleanup needs all of us. [so](#)



SPOTLIGHT

Samantha Redheart

Samantha Redheart (Yakama) partners with Columbia Riverkeeper in her capacity as STEM Coordinator with the Tribe's Environmental Restoration Waste Management (ERWM) program. Since 2017, Columbia Riverkeeper has funded a portion of Samantha's position to increase Hanford cleanup education and outreach on and around the Yakama Indian Reservation.

"We have created a successful partnership that benefits Tribal youth, our community members and makes learning about Hanford engaging," said Samantha. She noted that ERWM has collaborated with Columbia Riverkeeper to facilitate Hanford nuclear waste presentations for students in grades 8-12 who identify themselves as affiliates of a recognized tribe.

Yakama Nation has successfully facilitated multiple Hanford educational events with invited dignitaries, Tribal leaders, federal, state and local agencies. ERWM and Columbia Riverkeeper partnerships start with a shared goal: to inspire the next generation of advocates for a Hanford cleanup that is thorough and just. "I believe our work is purposeful and impactful for continued Tribal representation for ongoing Hanford cleanup activities," Samantha said.

"Today our family practices our fishing rights at the Columbia River," Samantha responded when asked how she connects to the Columbia outside of her work. "My family attends traditional ceremonies throughout the Yakama and Nez Perce communities. We enjoy spending our free time along the Columbia River."



Fighting for an Abundant Future

The Path Forward for Salmon Recovery

Salmon are iconic, but these fish are far more than a symbol. The Columbia supports important subsistence, commercial, and recreational salmon fisheries. For many people, the Columbia's salmon provide paychecks, meals, a connection to place and family, and a way to mark the changing seasons. Columbia River salmon are also food for critically endangered Southern Resident orcas and other wildlife.



By Miles Johnson,
Legal Director

Preventing extinction of Columbia River salmon is necessary but insufficient. It is not enough for salmon to persist in small numbers, in isolated places—living museums, so to speak. Our vision is a return to healthy, abundant, harvestable runs of salmon throughout the Columbia River and its many tributaries. Basin-wide abundance will ensure that salmon continue to play their critical role in Northwest ecosystems and that salmon cultures flourish for generations to come.

Given the threats to salmon, abundance may seem unrealistic. But salmon recovery on a large scale is possible. Conservation practices have led to remarkable increases in salmon in parts of the Columbia Basin like the Hanford Reach and the Okanogan River. With this in mind, Columbia Riverkeeper's *Saving Salmon* program continues to take aim at big goals.

Progress and Accomplishments in 2023

This year, we helped build national momentum toward Snake River dam removal. Columbia Riverkeeper

called attention to another massive fish kill caused by hot water and dams—80 percent of endangered Snake River sockeye salmon died in 2023 as they migrated through eight dams on the Columbia and Lower Snake. Following this tragedy, we sent legal notice of our intent to file a new Endangered Species Act case against the Army Corps of Engineers to require action to keep the Lower Snake River cool enough for salmon. We also submitted thousands of comments—from members like you—to the Biden Administration asking for Snake River dam removal to restore abundant salmon and honor Tribal rights.

The Biden Administration is listening! This September, the White House called for “a sustained national effort to restore healthy and abundant native fish populations in the [Columbia] Basin,” and directed all federal agencies to use their authorities to support this goal. We still have a long and uncertain path ahead, but we are gaining momentum.

Elsewhere in the Basin, Columbia Riverkeeper is supporting efforts by the Cowlitz Tribe and Yakama Nation to restore salmon migration throughout the Lewis River. This fall, PacifiCorp agreed to a new schedule to install fish passage at two of its dams on the Lewis. PacifiCorp broke a previous promise to retrofit its dams to include fish passage, so Columbia Riverkeeper will continue to hold PacifiCorp accountable for its promises to Tribes and the public.

Columbia Riverkeeper also worked with the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and many conservation groups to

SPOTLIGHT

Jeremy Takala



Jeremy Takala, Pax'una'shut in the Yakama language, is of the Kahmiltpah Band (Rock Creek) located on the Columbia River. An elected member of the Yakama Nation Tribal Council, Takala grew up in Goldendale, WA, fishing, hunting, and connecting with his heritage as a drummer and gatherer for the Rock Creek Longhouse.

“I'm passionate about upholding my tribe's Treaty Rights with the federal government and protecting resources for those yet born,” explains Councilman Takala, who is also vice chair of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

Takala collaborates with Columbia Riverkeeper staff on a number of fronts, including advocating for a just transition from fossil fuels along the Columbia River and salmon recovery.

“The Columbia River, as my aunt would say, is the veins of Mother Earth,” says Takala. “It's like us. The blood of who we are and the blood of Mother Earth flows here.”


For over a decade, Columbia Riverkeeper has worked in solidarity with Yakama Nation to oppose a pumped-storage hydroelectric development proposed at a sacred site known as Pushpum, a place where there is an abundance of traditional foods and medicines. The developer would excavate and destroy multiple Indigenous Traditional Cultural Properties, and the development would prevent Indigenous people's access to exercise ceremonial practices and Treaty-gathering rights. According to the Washington Dept. of Ecology, the development's impacts to Tribes are “adverse” and “unmitigable.”

“I value Columbia Riverkeeper's efforts in fighting for strong salmon runs, action in the face of the climate crisis, and a just transition that does not trample over Treaty Rights and repeat generations of injustices,” explained Takala.

oppose weakening Oregon's laws protecting migratory fish. Now we are challenging the rule changes in court in order to restore protections for salmon and steelhead.

The Path Forward

In solidarity with Tribal Nations, and in partnership with river communities, Columbia Riverkeeper will keep fighting for salmon in

2024 and beyond. The challenges we face are substantial. But we are building momentum toward actions—like Lower Snake River dam removal—that would ensure a future for salmon, orcas, and salmon cultures. 

Top left photo: Scenery along the Columbia River. Photo by Paloma Ayala. Top right photo: Councilman Jeremy Takala. Photo courtesy of Yakama Nation.



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What is Your Dream for the Columbia?

Columbia Riverkeeper unites people in dozens of rural and urban communities who dream—and fight—together. Our members deliver big wins and protect the places you love.

Join today.



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