

COLUMBIA RIVERKEEPER®

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Currents

The
IMPACT
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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While our victories may have national implications, our mission is centered on the Columbia River and all life connected to it.

For the River

Front cover: Painting by Sue Sutherland suesutherland.com.
 This page: The Hood River, photo credit: Paloma Ayala.
 Graphic Design by Melissa Delzio.

As a Columbia Riverkeeper supporter, you make an impact. From partnering with Tribes to secure a historic agreement for salmon recovery, to activating people across the Northwest to stop climate-wrecking fossil fuel infrastructure, you win critical victories for clean water, healthy communities, and our climate.

This work is more important than ever. In 2025, we will:

- Fight the fossil fuel industry because our climate and the Columbia depend on it.
- Work in solidarity with Tribes to restore the Columbia's iconic salmon using science, the law, and community organizing.
- Push back on government proposals to shortcut cleanup at the most toxic place in America, the Hanford Nuclear Site.
- Stop toxic pollution by taking polluters to court and advocating for laws that protect everyone who relies on locally caught fish, clean air, and clean water.
- Monitor water quality at popular swim beaches and lead dynamic, bilingual environmental education along the Columbia.

President-elect Donald Trump, an avowed climate change denier, made campaign promises to roll back environmental regulations that protect our air and water. As a local nonprofit with a strong track record of making a difference no matter what political party is in power, our team will continue to fight the good fight. Our commitments in the wake of the election:

Be relentless. Now is not the time to sit back and watch. It is time to double down on our efforts to fight the fossil fuel industry and enact strong climate policies

Listen, reflect, and navigate together. We will pause, evaluate, and ask for feedback. And own our mistakes. We will center our values in how we work, including our commitments to advance justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Keep it local. We are 100 percent focused on local and regional issues. We live here, raise our families here, and build long-term relationships here. While our victories may have national implications, our mission is centered on the Columbia River and all life connected to it.

Be grateful. What better job is there than to advocate for environmental and climate justice while connecting with incredible people who share a common connection to the river? We will always be grateful to our supporters for your trust and donations as we put every dollar to work



Lauren

Lauren Goldberg, *Executive Director*

Your Impact in 2024

Columbia Riverkeeper teams with river communities and works in solidarity with Tribal Nations to fight for environmental and climate justice. We combine legal advocacy, grassroots community organizing, education, and creative communications strategies to engage and center people who rely on the lifeblood of the Pacific Northwest. Together, we advocate for what we love—and celebrate critical victories for clean water, salmon, and our climate.

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.



Cleaning Up Hanford

100+ people who joined us at the Hanford Journey, an event planned and led by Yakama Nation's Hanford cleanup agency and Columbia Riverkeeper to draw attention to the critical importance of Hanford Nuclear Site cleanup

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

4 student representatives of the Yakama Nation who participated in the State & Tribal Government Working Group meeting in New Mexico, thanks to scholarships from Columbia Riverkeeper



Stopping Pollution

5 Clean Water Act legal actions brought or settled in 2024, all with the goal of reducing harmful pollution in the Columbia and its tributaries

2,100+ people who called on the federal government to kickstart cleanup at the Columbia's newest Superfund site, Bradford Island and surrounding waters

\$2.5 million awarded to Tribes and nonprofit organizations as a result of our Clean Water Act enforcement actions



Fighting Fossil Fuels

3 long-term greenhouse gas emission-reduction plans for Oregon's largest gas utilities rejected by the state's Public Utility Commission, in favor of more aggressive plans to move away from fossil fuels

4,900+ people who spoke up for climate action using Columbia Riverkeeper's petitions

3 lawsuits brought by Columbia Riverkeeper to stop the expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure in the Pacific Northwest



Saving Salmon

Decades of litigation, community organizing, and policy advocacy, which culminated in the signing of the Columbia River Basin Restoration Agreement, a historic agreement that opens the door for Lower Snake River dam removal

4 Water Quality Attainment Plans for Lower Snake River dams rejected by Washington state regulators, a critical step ensuring the federal government takes action to reduce heat pollution caused by the dams

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



Engaging Communities

230 water quality samples collected at Columbia River beaches

1,000+ kids and young adults who experienced bilingual (English and Spanish) environmental education through Columbia Riverkeeper's outreach program

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

1,400+ pounds of garbage volunteers collected at community cleanup events along the Columbia

Our Mission

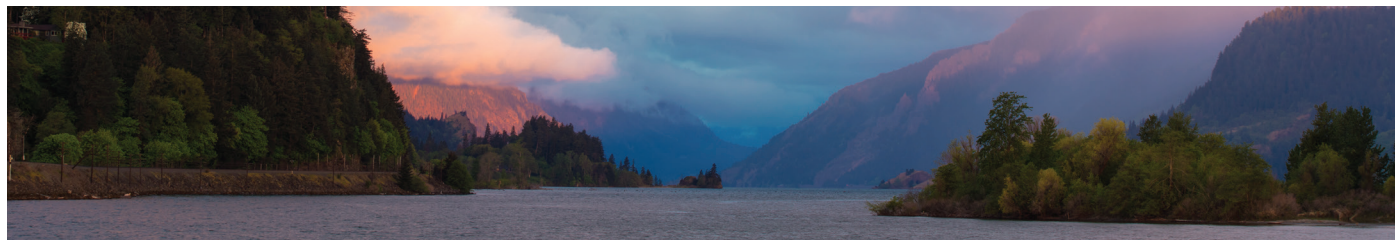
To protect and restore the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean.

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.



The People Who Give



By Dianne Riley,
Sustaining Gifts Director

The people who give are everywhere and they give in so many vitally important, tangible and impactful ways—not always financially, but most critically with a heartfelt desire to make a difference or simply to express their innate compassion.

I started working as a fundraiser on a volunteer basis more than 30 years ago. To be clear, I'm not counting the years I went door-to-door selling Girl Scout cookies while in elementary school and I don't mind aging myself by telling you that my childhood adventures in fundraising were in the early 1970s. It excites me to think about how long I have been in this line of work and all the things I've seen and experienced along the way.

For example, I can tell you— from my perspective and quite

sincerely—that Columbia Riverkeeper donors are exceptional among givers. Many of our donors are motivated by deep, personal stories and many have been with us for years, if not decades. Some have simple, honest reasons for giving; others treat giving like a dedicated health or spiritual practice without any reason that can be put into words. Here are a few examples that illustrate why people give to Columbia Riverkeeper:

I support Columbia Riverkeeper because they support the efforts of small communities who lack big city resources to fight the well-funded big polluters. They have our backs with scientific, legal, and organizing expertise. Most of all, CRK has heart for their work and our people.

Diane L. Dick

My donations to Riverkeeper are not remarkable or even particularly significant. On their own they are meaningless. A grain of sand on the rail will not stop a coal train. But when combined by Riverkeeper with the financial voices of its other members, my donations become the finger in the dike, preventing polluters' appropriation of the estuaries in the Lower Columbia. Where else can one buy the freedom for clean water to flow for just an affordable contribution?

John Wood

I support Columbia Riverkeeper because I am so grateful to know that you have dedicated, knowledgeable staff and volunteers who are always vigilant and ready to act to protect, conserve and restore our most precious regional resource. Thank you for the effective work you do on my behalf and on the behalf of all who call the Northwest their home.

Pam Horan

We wanted to help save the Columbia River, and saw that no one else was trying to as much as Columbia Riverkeeper. We are committed to supporting them, and we have pledged to continue to support them through our private estate donation. We hope you will, too.

John & Celia Cruz

It's easy to be cynical these days—not just about the politics of this moment or era, but about *everything*. Our news overflows with countless stories of communities rocked by the outcomes of poorly conceived policies, of people out for themselves, and of collective pain and trauma. Those stories come from all the news outlets—not only thoughtful, responsible journalism helping to keep us genuinely informed, but also from our social media and the informal channels that share neighborly gossip. Any slice of it can leave you with a bitter taste.

However, the truth and reality of our lives is always going to be bigger, more subtle, and more

complex than the steady string of hard-hitting headlines and juicy tidbits about “other people’s shortcomings” that many of us consume regularly. What we miss most often are the quiet, constant efforts coming out of our very own neighborhoods, networks and even our own households that reflect what we value most. Yet this is how we heal, help and grow as human beings.

The people who give are everywhere and they give in so many vitally important, tangible and impactful ways—not always financially, but most critically with a heartfelt desire to make a difference or simply to express their innate compassion. At Columbia Riverkeeper, we know these people. They are our partners, our colleagues, and our members. The people who give are you. *so*

Give Today



Celebrate Victories



By Miles Johnson,
Legal Director

In tumultuous times, we take strength from a powerful force: the Columbia River. Pause. Reflect. Celebrate what we've accomplished together for the river, our neighbors, families, and those who come after us.

Protecting Salmon Habitat

Our vision for the Columbia River includes abundant, harvestable runs of salmon that help sustain communities, economies, cultures, and Tribal rights. Yet there are 14 dams on the mainstem of the Columbia River (and more than 450 dams throughout the entire watershed) that significantly affect the river's flow, water quality, and salmon runs.

Columbia Riverkeeper's work to protect and restore salmon focuses on removing dams, improving fish passage, and restoring water quality necessary for native fish to spawn and migrate. We prioritize these solutions because they work: Where adequate fish passage and water quality have been protected, certain wild runs of Columbia River salmon have recovered and now support sustainable fisheries.

Lower Snake River dam removal has gained unprecedented momentum in 2024, thanks to tremendous leadership from—and a binding legal agreement

among—Tribal Nations, the states of Oregon and Washington, the Biden-Harris administration, and dedicated organizations like Columbia Riverkeeper. One hallmark of this momentum is a Tribal Circumstances Report, detailing the historic and ongoing harm to Tribal Nations and people from the dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers. "It is the first time the federal government tells the truth about how the construction of the dams on the Columbia River devastated salmon runs, inundated tribal villages, important regional gathering and trading centers, sacred sites, burial grounds, and fishing areas that tribes depended upon for subsistence and trade" said Corinne Sams, Board of Trustees Member at Large for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

Other important signs of progress include the initiation of federal plans to replace irrigation infrastructure and power generation to enable Lower Snake River dam removal. But there are no guarantees or easy answers. And the Bonneville Power Administration and the Army Corps of Engineers continue to resist dam removal. Nevertheless, Columbia Riverkeeper believes that we, along with so many others, have created the best opportunity for Lower Snake River dam removal and basin-wide salmon recovery in several decades. We fully intend to see it through.

We have good news regarding Lower Snake River temperatures, too. For the last decade, Columbia Riverkeeper and many others have used science and the Clean Water Act to ratchet up pressure on the Army Corps to reduce heat pollution caused by the Lower Snake River dams, which often kills salmon. As a result of that work, and courageous leadership from the Washington Dept. of Ecology, the Army Corps recently released a one-year schedule for working with state, Tribal, and federal partners to plan for reducing the Lower Snake River dams' heat pollution. We are especially encouraged by the Washington Dept. of Ecology's clear statements that nothing is off the table when it comes to studying what could be done to keep the Lower Snake River cool enough for salmon—like drawing down reservoirs for part or all of the year. We still have a long road ahead, but we have renewed hope in light of the progress made.

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Corinne Sams, *Board of Trustees Member at Large for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation*

Addressing Toxic Contamination

For over a century, corporations and some federal agencies treated the Columbia River like a dump. While the region has made important progress for clean water, certain areas of the Columbia still contain dangerous types and levels of toxic pollution. Columbia Riverkeeper believes that everyone has the right to drink clean water, swim in the river, and eat locally caught fish without fear of toxic contamination. We are working to restore those rights by advocating for swift, effective cleanup of toxic sites and promoting rules that limit additional pollution.

This year, we are pleased to report continued progress on getting toxic polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) out of the Columbia: After much pressure from Tribes and Columbia Riverkeeper, federal agencies finally signed the Bradford Island Cleanup Agreement. The Army Corps dumped industrial waste on Bradford Island and in the Columbia River at Bonneville Dam for decades. As a result, resident fish around Bonneville Dam have the highest levels of cancer-causing PCB contamination in the United States, making them unsafe to eat and harming Tribal and diverse communities who depend on these fish to sustain their livelihoods and cultures. "We'll keep working in solidarity with Tribes and river



communities until the Army Corps cleans up its toxic mess” said Kate Murphy, Senior Community Organizer

At long last, the Washington Dept. of Ecology has proposed new water quality standards to protect people who often eat locally caught fish from toxic contamination. Tribes and other organizations, including Columbia Riverkeeper, have advocated for these rules for over a decade, using science, litigation, and grassroots organizing. Sadly, powerful polluting industries in Washington (like Boeing) have blocked progress until now. The proposed rules set water quality standards to protect all Washington residents from toxic and cancer-causing chemicals like mercury, arsenic, PCBs, and lead that accumulate in fish tissue.

Supporting River Communities

Just as the Columbia River is a collection of interconnected watersheds, Columbia Riverkeeper is one of many organizations and communities striving for a more just, healthy, and livable region. We have been the recipient of incredible support and partnership from countless members, foundations, and allies over the years. In turn, we look for ways to support those around us—especially those who have been or remain vulnerable, marginalized, or without access to resources or power. We embrace a mindset of abundance, and we believe that an important part of protecting and restoring the Columbia River is supporting others who also do that work.

Case in point: We closely partner with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation’s Environmental Restoration/Waste Management (ERWM) program, helping to fund and conduct outreach at local schools and at community and Tribal events on and near the Yakama Nation reservation in Toppenish, WA. “It is critical to inspire the next generation of people who advocate for Hanford cleanup, since it will require many generations to protect the Columbia and everyone who relies on it,” said Esteban Ortiz, Program Coordinator for Columbia Riverkeeper. This year, we teamed up with ERWM to reach more than 150 students, and hundreds more at the Central Washington state fair in Yakima, with the hope of inspiring the next generation of Hanford Nuclear Site cleanup advocates.

Later this year, Seeding Justice will award over \$2.5 million in grants to Tribes and nonprofits to protect and restore the Columbia. When Columbia Riverkeeper sues polluters, we hold them accountable in part by requiring that they pay a penalty, often to Seeding Justice’s Columbia River Restoration Fund. Seeding Justice’s role is to facilitate the community-led grantmaking process, and recruit, train, and support a grantmaking committee composed of environmental justice activists and organizers.

“It is critical to inspire the next generation of people who advocate for Hanford cleanup, since it will require many generations to protect the Columbia and everyone who relies on it.”

Esteban Ortiz, *Program Coordinator for Columbia Riverkeeper*

This summer Columbia Riverkeeper Program Coordinator Esteban Ortiz paddled the Hanford Reach with students from Washington State University. The purpose of this experience was to explore concepts of, and provide a space for, the first step in collaboration and community engagement. Photo by Ben Herndon.

Fighting Fossil Fuels and False Climate Solutions

Columbia Riverkeeper continues to make progress in the fight to reduce our region’s climate pollution and reliance on fossil energy. In 2024, we used smart, creative legal arguments to challenge proposals that would manufacture and consume harmful fuels.

Columbia Riverkeeper recently began two different legal challenges to an unconventional diesel refinery proposed in the Columbia River Estuary. We are suing the Army Corps of Engineers for allowing the developer to haul heavy construction and refinery equipment along an aging levee—even though local farmers have expressed serious safety concerns and the Army Corps’ own inspections show that the levee is inadequate. In the words of Audrey Leonard, Columbia Riverkeeper’s Staff Attorney, “this is a very straightforward case. We’re asking the Army Corps to follow its own rules and keep local farmland above water.” We are also appealing Columbia County’s approval of a rail yard in

agricultural land to serve the refinery. These lawsuits, if successful, could significantly reduce the potential harm caused by the refinery or lead to the cancellation of this misguided proposal. Terrific attorneys from Advocates for the West and Crag Law Center are representing us in these legal challenges.

Elsewhere, Columbia Riverkeeper worked alongside Tribes, nonprofits, and community members to convince the Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) to limit fracked gas use. Together, we convinced the PUC to reject proposals by Oregon’s three gas utility companies that would have led to increased fracked gas consumption—and higher prices for Oregonians. We also won important victories at the PUC preventing NW Natural, Oregon’s largest natural gas utility, from gouging low-income families with high energy bills and passing on the costs of pro-fossil fuel lobbying efforts to Oregonians. Columbia Riverkeeper was represented by Earthjustice and the Green Energy Institute at Lewis & Clark Law School in this proceeding.

We are proud of our progress in 2024 and humbled by the support and partnerships that make these victories possible. ☪



By Lauren Goldberg,
Executive Director

Community Impact

When I started volunteering at Columbia Riverkeeper in fall 2005, the organization had two staff members and a network of volunteers, mainly concentrated in the Columbia River Gorge and Portland. Fast forward to 2024: our staff is 21 strong, we have over 16,000 members and supporters, and our network of volunteers spans multiple river communities, from the Lower Columbia to the Hanford Reach and beyond. Communities are making an impact for the Columbia—demanding clean water, climate action, and strong salmon runs.



Water Quality Director Lorri Epstein leads environmental programming at the Nichols Natural Area in Hood River, OR. Photo by Arturo Leyva.

By supporting the team at Columbia Riverkeeper, you advance critical outreach and education in river communities and online. To be clear, the outreach and education run two ways. We listen. We field tough questions that push us to dig deeper, from the community members who watchdog changes in their neighborhood (“I’ve noticed an increase in oil-train traffic”) to kids who ask tough questions (“Why do pipes pump pollution into the river we swim in?”) to concerned parents and grandparents (“Why is radioactive tank waste at Hanford still buried underground?”).

In the last year, Columbia Riverkeeper’s staff hosted or participated in over 45 events in more than a dozen communities up and down the river. Let’s not forget the webinar, either, our old friend from the pandemic. We continued to host our popular webinars series—featuring journalists, scientists, and cultural experts—on our Columbia Riverkeeper YouTube channel. Here, we feature a handful of the inspiring events that united communities for clean water and climate action.



Members of Columbia Riverkeeper’s staff and board of directors gathered for the 2024 Hanford Journey. Photo by Kelly Turso.

Kate Murphy, Senior Community Organizer, and Miles Johnson, Legal Director, on the Columbia Riverkeeper boat. Photo by Zowie DeLeon.



Sense of Place and Fisher Poets

Legal Director Miles Johnson shared powerful insights into the effort to restore Columbia and Snake River salmon. In January, Miles spoke to a packed house at the popular Sense of Place lecture series in Hood River, OR, hosted by the Mt. Adams Institute. The next month, Miles headed to Astoria to present (and exchange fishing stories) at the Fisher Poets Gathering.

Hanford Journey

Yakama Nation and Columbia Riverkeeper hosted the fourth annual Hanford Journey. Along the banks and on the water of the Hanford Reach, the event brought together scientists, activists, artists, elected Tribal officials, elders, young people, birds, elk, and even a coyote, to share stories and learn about the Hanford Nuclear Site.



Education & Outreach Intern Jenna Boivin connected with community members while tabling at the Festival of Nations in Cascade Locks, OR. Photo by Paloma Ayala.

Festival of Nations

Columbia Riverkeeper was honored to host a booth at the Gorge Festival of Nations in Cascade Locks. This event offered a unique opportunity to experience the vibrant cultures, traditions, and histories of the Tribes of the Columbia River Gorge with a focus on raising awareness of salmon and river restoration.

Nichols Natural Area School Groups

The Nichols Natural Area is a living laboratory in the middle of the bustling Hood River waterfront. At Nichols, learning is not confined by classroom walls. This year over 500 kids experienced this unique environmental education experience.

Rumble on the River

For the past year, a coalition of climate and social justice activists have been presenting a series of monthly Rumble On The River community forums in Portland, OR, bringing together expert voices to explain the risks of fossil fuel infrastructure. Senior Community Organizer Kate

Murphy and other staff members spoke at and helped organize this ongoing event series.

Vancouver Peace and Justice Fair

Community Organizer Juan Monje hosted a booth at the popular Vancouver Peace and Justice Fair. The event builds community among grassroots peace and justice groups in Southwest Washington and explores the social justice issues facing the people who call the area home.

Goldendale Community Forum on Protect Pushpum

On a windy night in rural Klickitat County, over 75 people attended a forum featuring local community members and experts about the proposed Goldendale Pumped Storage development. Speakers included Bronsco Jim Jr., Kamilt-pah (Rock Creek) Band of the Yakama Nation; Eric Strid, Columbia Gorge Climate Action Network; and Simone Anter, Columbia Riverkeeper. **SD**



Community members play the interactive “fish game” at the White Salmon, WA, El Grito celebration. Photo by Juan Monje.



Simone Anter, Staff Attorney & Hanford Program Director

As 2024 comes to end, Columbia Riverkeeper is celebrating our wins and setting our goals for 2025. A new year means new challenges, but it also means new opportunities to protect the river that we all love so much. Here are the five challenges we plan to tackle.

1 Put the Fun in Superfund

Maintain energy and engagement on long-term hazardous cleanup sites along the Columbia River.

Columbia Riverkeeper focuses energy on two Superfund cleanup sites along the Columbia River: the Hanford Nuclear Site and Bradford Island, the river's newest Superfund site. What sets Superfund sites apart from other cleanup sites? The long-term nature of the clean up involved and the hazardous nature of the contamination. This poses unique challenges for engagement, including maintaining hope and engagement in the process, two things we will continue to do in 2025.

Both Bradford Island and Hanford pose enormous risks to the Columbia River—Hanford being the most contaminated site in the Western Hemisphere with contaminated groundwater already reaching the river, and Bradford Island having the highest levels of cancer-causing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in the country. Watchdogging the cleanup process is vital to ensuring government accountability.

2 Rewrite the Script on False Solutions to the Climate Crisis

Call out Small Modular Nuclear Reactors (SMNRs) and greenwashed energy developments that will not stop the climate crisis.

As our climate crisis worsens, increased energy development proposals abound. Columbia Riverkeeper will continue to vet new energy development along the Columbia based on the proposed environmental impacts, impacts to BIPOC and frontline communities, and impacts to Tribal cultural and religious resources.

Columbia Riverkeeper will also continue to advocate for a just and equitable green energy transition. We'll fight against false solutions like SMNRs, which will produce more nuclear waste for which there is no long-term disposal, and improperly sited developments like the Goldendale Pumped Storage proposal.

3 Forget Fossil Fuels

Stop new fossil fuel infrastructure and advocate for policies that promote climate action.

Zenith, NXT Energy and GTN are all energy projects that will impact people's water and increase our reliance on fossil fuels. In 2025, Riverkeeper will elevate the voices of people who are pinpointing the flaws in these developments. Our climate and the Columbia River cannot afford to lock in decades of fossil fuel infrastructure.

In addition to fighting fossil fuel infrastructure, Columbia Riverkeeper will continue to engage in the strategic local and state policy opportunities to advance our climate goals.

4 Empower and Inspire

Learn from and prepare the next generation with the skills and knowledge to take up the mantle.

Nothing is more challenging than continued, long-term inspiration and

vigilance, something Columbia Riverkeeper's campaigns require. In 2025, we will tackle this problem by continuing our education and outreach all around the Columbia River Basin, to build collective knowledge around the issues we work on and how to stay involved. Focusing on the next generation not only nurtures tomorrow's leaders, it gives us fresh perspectives on how we can be more effective in our advocacy.

Collaboration in the form of skill building and uplifting the voices of the next generation ensures that this important work continues. Riverkeeper will continue spending time in the classroom, talking with students about our work, tabling at community events, providing internship and scholarship opportunities, and uplifting the next generation's voices.

5 Recover Harvestable Salmon Runs

Demand action now for better fish passage and heat pollution reductions on behalf of imperiled salmon.

The largest contributing factors to the loss of salmon are warm water and dams, which raise water temperatures, impede migration, and block access to important spawning habitat. As our climate heats up, the Columbia and Snake river temperatures continue to rise. We have to act now if we are going to save these keystone species from extinction. In 2025, we will hold the government accountable to the Columbia Basin Restoration Initiative, advance litigation for fish passage, and use science and the law to restore the Columbia's iconic salmon.

With your support, Columbia Riverkeeper has won on big issues in the past. We are gearing up for our 25th anniversary and another year of fighting the good fight, arm and arm with people who rely on and love the mighty Columbia. ☞

Five Challenges to Tackle in 2025



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With Gratitude

You power victories for clean
water, healthy communities,
and climate action.