

# The Dipnetter

News of the River from the  
Columbia River Inter-Tribal  
Fish Commission



October 2011

## CONDIT DAM REMOVAL

BY CRITFC HYDROSYSTEM SPECIALIST BOB HEINITH



Bob Heinith

In 1913, Condit Dam, a 125-foot arched, concrete structure, was constructed in the White Salmon River, Washington about three miles from the river confluence with Bonneville Pool in a narrow canyon of the river. Before construction of the dam, historical accounts from tribal members estimated that in some years over 8,000

adult salmon and steelhead returned to the river. Later, fish production experts estimated that 45 miles of good to excellent fish habitat was rendered inaccessible by the dam.

Two fish ladders were constructed beginning in 1914 to pass fish over the dam, but they washed out due to high flows and poor construction

methods. The State of Washington Fish Commission accepted a one-time mitigation payment for \$5,000 for loss of fish passage to the upper White Salmon and frequent dewatering of the river below the dam. No

mitigation was ever offered to tribes for the loss of the fishery resource.

In 1991, Condit Dam's owner, PacifiCorp, filed for a new license application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Fish passage was not included in the new license application. The Yakama Nation, CRITFC, Washington Fisheries, National Marine Fishery Service, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service required fish passage for a new license, although the tribes favored dam removal. Subsequently, FERC issued an environmental impact statement (EIS) in 1994-95 which included both fish passage over the dam and dam removal. The dam removal method in the EIS was costly, as it required sediment excavation behind the dam before the dam was removed. On the other hand, fish ladders and screen passage systems for juvenile salmon, the other passage option, was even more expensive.

In 1997, PacifiCorp, the Yakama Nation, and CRITFC entered into a partnership to explore the less expensive method of dam removal. A deconstruction plan was prepared by some dam removal experts that originally provided removal plans for the Elwha dams. Old construction drawings revealed a tunnel at the bottom of the dam that was never used. The stages of removal included lowering down the reservoir behind the dam via the powerhouse penstocks, blasting open the tunnel at the base of the dam to reduce the reservoir level to river level and carry reservoir sediments downstream. The next deconstruction stage involved cutting pieces of the dam out with a diamond saw from the top to the bottom of the dam and



*The nearly 100-year-old Condit Dam, slated for removal to allow fish passage to the upper reaches of the White Salmon River.*

hauling the pieces out of the site by crane. The last stage involved removal of the coffer dam at the bottom of the structure. The reduced cost of this deconstruction method and the fact that the reservoir behind the dam was already 60-70% full of sediment, which limited the dam's hydro-generation peaking capabilities, convinced PacifiCorp that dam removal could be a good business decision.

The 1999 Settlement Agreement between PacifiCorp, the Yakama Nation, CRITFC, Washington Fish and Wildlife, National Marine Fishery Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington Department of Ecology, American Rivers and other non-governmental organizations provided \$17 million for dam removal, including \$1 million to the Yakama Nation for upstream mitigation and \$500,000 to the CRITFC tribes for managing the sediment from the dam removal at the Underwood Fishing Site.

Removal funds were accrued from Condit power generation from the time of the settlement signing until 2006, however, delays to acquiring regulatory permits and local resistance to dam removal extended the removal period. Finally, with the 401 Water Quality Certification issued and a settlement with the local counties, FERC issued a dam surrender order to PacifiCorp in

December 2010.

Preliminary dam removal work such as lowering the reservoir, securing the site area and drilling for blasting the tunnel are already in progress. The projected date of the dam breach is October 26, 2011. The entire removal process, including restoring the dam site, should conclude in about one year.

When it is dismantled, Condit Dam will be the largest U.S. dam ever to be removed for fish passage. An entire river ecosystem will be restored with marine nutrients, unblocked sediment transport and natural flow, and temperature regimes. Pacific lamprey will utilize the river habitat for the first time in nearly 100 years.

Annual estimates of adult salmon returns to the river from the fishery agencies after removal are Coho: 1,200; Steelhead: 600; Fall chinook (tule): 1,000; and Spring chinook: 800. 🐟

*The author of this article, Bob Heinith, has diligently served the tribes on hydrosystem issues for the past 20 years. His presence at meetings was oftentimes dreaded by state and federal officials, who recognized his relentless dedication to protecting the river from the impacts of the region's hydrosystem. It is fitting, therefore, that he timed his retirement to coincide with the removal of Condit Dam. CRITFC thanks him for his dedicated service and wishes him all the best.*

### Abandoned Property Notice

The US Army Corps of Engineers would like to remind fishers to remove all property including titled vehicles, vessels, camping equipment, and fishing gear from Corps-managed lands after the fishing season is completed. This includes Seufert Park, The Dalles Northshore Boat Ramp, and Giles French Park, and other Corps-managed lands. Property left after the fishing season may be removed as abandoned property and if not claimed will eventually be disposed of by the Corps of Engineers. For questions please contact The Dalles Lock and Dam Natural Resources Office at (541) 506-7816. 🐟

## CRITFC Officers and Commissioners

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## Pacific Salmon Commission

BY CRITFC FISH MGMT MANAGER MIKE MATYLEWICH

Tribal representatives are preparing for another round of discussions in the Pacific Salmon Commission process, which recommends catch levels in British Columbia and Southeast Alaska ocean salmon fisheries. Discussions regarding the catch levels for 2012 start in October and continue through February.

Ocean salmon fisheries in North/Central B.C., the West Coast of Vancouver Island, and Southeast Alaska are managed on an aggregate abundance of the populations contributing to the fishery. Allowable catches increase with increasing abundance. On average, Upper Columbia River summer and fall chinook contribute about 25% of the catch in these fisheries.

The specific catch levels are determined by harvest schedules negotiated in the Chinook Chapter to the Pacific Salmon Treaty. The negotiated levels are designed to keep ocean harvest impacts of Columbia River summer and fall chinook at or below recent year levels and bring back additional fish to the river.

The latest chapter was completed in 2008 and runs through 2017. It calls for a 30% reduction in West Coast Vancouver Island and a 15% reduction in Southeast Alaska in response to stock status. For 2011 fisheries, estimates indicated an increase in abundance. The allowable catches for 2011 were 294,800 for Southeast Alaska, 182,400 for North British Columbia and 196,800 for West Coast Vancouver Island.

The Chinook Chapter also describes a number of technical assignments designed to improve chinook fisheries management. Total mortality management seeks to improve management by accounting for incidental mortalities in allowable catches. The most common form of incidental mortality in ocean fisheries is throwing back fish smaller than the size limit. Precautionary management seeks to accounting for uncertainties in environmental factors affecting the survival of the fish. These and other issues related to the implementation of the Chinook Chapter will be discussed during the next round of discussions.

Tribal representatives play a key role in the PSC process. Olney Patt, Jr., WARM SPRINGS, is the current tribal commissioner and the alternate is Ron Allen, JAMESTOWN S'KLALLAM. The commissioners receive advice from a number of panels that cover specific geographic areas. Joe Oatman, NEZ PERCE, is one of the tribal representatives on the Southern Panel. The tribal representatives in the PSC process are supported by tribal and CRITFC policy advisors and technical staffs. 🐟

## Nez Perce Wins Writing Contest

The American Fisheries Society hosts an annual student writing contest. This year, Nez Perce PhD student Zachary Penney won the award with his essay titled "Live to Spawn Another Day: Understanding the Fuel Efficiency of Snake River Steelhead." Penney attends the University of Idaho where he studies iteroparity of Idaho steelhead. An award ceremony took place September 6 at the AFS annual meeting in Seattle. Congratulations Zachary! (Read the essay online at <http://tinyurl.com/669bspm>) 🐟

## Ice for Zone 6 Fishers

BY CRITFC SALMON MARKETING SPECIALIST LES BROWN

Thanks to a generous grant to CRITFC from the Bonneville Power Administration, flake ice will be available to Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce fishers throughout the fall fishery. Limited quantities of ice will be available on a first-come-first-served basis at the White Salmon Fish Processing Center from 11am-2pm on days that the fishery is open. Logistics are being worked out to also deliver ice to certain fishing access sites in Zone 6. A delivery schedule will be published once it's finalized. Call (503) 799-8640 to check on current ice availability. 🐟



*The flake ice machine at the White Salmon Fish Processing Center is capable of producing 10 tons of ice per day. Above is a tote being filled from the ice machine.*



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Yakama • Warm Springs  
Umatilla • Nez Perce



## Standing for the River

This summer, CRITFC hosted the Future of Our Salmon conference to explore how the region will move ahead in restoring salmon to the Columbia River basin. One of the outcomes of the conference was the identification of toxics as a significant threat to fish and the Columbia River Basin. This was a call to action. We are learning rapidly about the impacts of contaminants on salmon, sturgeon, and lamprey and we must move this issue to the forefront. It has gone neglected for too long.

On August 24, tribal leaders gathered with executives from federal and state governments and non-profits in Spokane to sign a commitment to reduce toxic contaminants in the Columbia River basin. The commitment expressed public and scientific concern about the health of the ecosystem and recognized the need for collaboration, improved communication and increased awareness to make progress in reducing toxic contaminants.

## critfc executive director's message

Only by working together with all the partners and co-managers whose work affects and impacts the Columbia River basin do we have any hope in answering the grave threat of unclean water.



Paul Lumley  
YAKAMA



*Tribal, federal, and state officials and representatives gathered to pledge their commitment to reduce toxic contaminants in the Columbia River basin.*



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CRITFC is providing limited quantities of ice during the fall fishery at not cost to members of the four tribes. Details inside.

