

The Dipnetter

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



March 2012

SEA LION UPDATE



by Doug Hatch
Fisheries Biologist

In early March, CRITFC technicians will begin nonlethal hazing of sea lions in the Bonneville Dam tailrace. We will be trying to move the sea lions away from the fish ladder entrances, where salmon are concentrated and most vulnerable to predation. In addition, CRITFC is developing and implementing techniques to estimate how many sea lions are in the lower Columbia River. This will provide valuable insight on the size of this problem.

In some years, one or two sea lions travel through the lock at Bonneville Dam and impact Indian fishers. If you spot a sea lion upstream of Bonneville Dam, please report it to the CRITFC Enforcement office at 1 (800) 487-3474. Include information like the time and location of the sea lion, take a picture if you can, and note if the animal is hauled out on bank. We will use this information to locate traps in the Bonneville pool to catch the animal and move it back downstream.

Fishers are reminded that they can protect their catch and gear from sea lions using noise makers and visual repellants including horns, whistles, starter pistols, streamers, flashing lights, slingshots, and paint ball guns. However, act responsibly and use

common sense! Sea lions are federally protected and regardless of method or intent, the property owner or fisher may be subject to prosecution should a sea lion be seriously injured or killed as a result of deterrence efforts for the protection of property, gear or catch. 🐟



John Whiteaker (CRITFC) and Fidelia Andy (Yakama) conducting sea lion hazing below Bonneville Dam.



Visitors watch a sea lion navigate the Bonneville Dam fish ladder.

FIELD TECH JOB OPENINGS

CRITFC is hiring field technicians for fisheries research work and for hazing sea lions. One position involves field, laboratory, and office work related to the investigation of steelhead reproductive strategies and artificial kelt reconditioning. The anticipated start date is June 1.

Other seasonal positions involve hazing sea lions below Bonneville Dam. This boat work will start March 1 and continue until about the end of May.

For more information about these positions, visit www.critfc.org and click "employment opportunities" at the bottom of the page.



Stuart Ellis
Harvest Biologist

Winter and Spring Fisheries

Winter Fisheries: The winter gillnet fishery began on February 1. Most of the catch in this fishery is sturgeon, but steelhead are also caught. Catch data are only just starting to come in. Sturgeon harvest through February 20 totals 700 in the Bonneville pool, 80 in The Dalles pool, and 645 in the John Day pool. The commercial harvest guidelines are 2,000 in Bonneville and 1,000 in each of The Dalles and John Day pools. In many years, the commercial sturgeon guidelines are caught and one or more pools close before March 21. Information about the catches in this fishery will be distributed as it becomes available. The Commission took action to end the sale of incidentally caught spring chinook on February 29. Please consult your tribe's fishery regulations for more information.

Spring Season Fisheries: The tribes have not finalized specific plans for spring fisheries yet. There will be many conversations both among and between tribes concerning spring fisheries. Any decisions made by the tribes concerning spring fisheries will be made available as the decisions are finalized. 🐟

HACCP TRAINING



Tribal fishers attend the first HACCP this year in Hood River. The Salmon Marketing program would like to thank the fishers for their dedication for making food safety a priority and increasing the positive image of Indian-caught salmon.

FISHING SITE MAINTENANCE JOB OPENINGS

There are three new job openings in the CRITFC Fishing Site Maintenance Department. Two are full-time and one is a seasonal position. For more information, visit www.critfc.org and click "employment opportunities" at the bottom of the page or check your tribal newspaper. The closing date for the positions is March 30.

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BOATING SAFETY AROUND COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC

BY CRITFE OFFICER JERROD DANIELS

Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Enforcement is committed to maintaining a high level of service and safety to Indian fishers on the Columbia River. This year we aim to further promote Operation Stay Afloat and encourage all fishers to practice navigational safety around barges and other vessels sharing the waters of the Columbia River.

The Columbia River hosts thousands of recreational boats and is used by barges, tugboats and towboats carrying tons of cargo up and down the river. Being aware of the constraints under which these commercial vessels operate can arm fishers with the best protection against danger and could save a life.

Commercial boats such as barges must stay in the channel—it's the only place deep enough for them to operate. In some areas of the Columbia River, the channel extends bank to bank, so expect vessel traffic on any portion of the waterway. Also, be aware that these vessels travel deceptively fast. A towboat can travel one mile in seven minutes, and it generally takes 3/4 to 1-1/2 miles to stop. For example, if your boat is in front of a moving tug or tow, you may have less than one minute to get out of the way.

Try to give these vessels as wide a path as possible. The powerful engines of large vessels can cause a smaller vessel to be pulled toward the tow when passing alongside. It's also very easy to get into their blind spot, which can extend for hundreds of feet in front of tugboats and towboats pushing barges. Operating in adverse weather or low visibility can make you even

tougher to spot. Use navigation lights while operating during hours of darkness to help them see you.

Stay out of the path of towboats and barges approaching bridges and locks. They must be lined up and committed to their approach well ahead, and it's dangerous and difficult for them to change course.

Ships, towboats and tugboats use VHF radio channels. If you are unsure of your situation or their intentions, feel free to contact them by VHF radio. Call 911 in an emergency or call CRITFE at 541-386-6363. If you have a VHF radio use channels 14 and 16. Resort only to dispatching a "mayday" call when there is imminent risk of loss of property or life. Have a cell phone stored in a watertight compartment.

Designate a lookout. Assign one person in your boat to look out, particularly for commercial traffic, both day and night.

Understand horn signals. Five or more short blasts on the horn is the "danger" signal. Stay clear of vessels sounding the "danger" signal.

If you are involved in or witness a boating emergency, key information to give dispatch is: location and type of emergency, how many people are on board and their names, distance from shore, whether or not occupants in the boat are wearing a life vest.

Know your tribe's boat safety requirements, equip your boat with the proper supplies, and learn all the navigation rules and live by them. In this way, we can all share the river safely.



Barges like this are a common sight along the Columbia and lower Snake rivers.

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Yakama • Warm Springs
Umatilla • Nez Perce



Retaining Sovereignty

We have some good news from a February ruling by the Washington State Supreme Court, tribal jurisdiction of the in-lieu and treaty fishing access sites was retained. In *State v. Jim*, the court was asked to consider whether Washington State enforcement had jurisdiction to cite an enrolled member of the Yakama Nation at the Maryhill Treaty Fishing Access Site. While fishing for summer chinook, Mr. Jim had caught several undersized sturgeon in his net. When he returned to shore, he was cited by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for not immediately releasing the fish as is required by Washington State law. The Yakama tribal regulation allows fishers a “reasonable opportunity” to release the sturgeon.

There were many ups and downs as this case went through several courts before finally reaching the Washington State Supreme Court. In the ruling, Judge Susan Owens wrote “The state lacks criminal jurisdiction

CRITFC Executive Director’s Message

at Maryhill because the treaty fishing access site is tribal land, established and reserved by Congress for the exclusive use of tribal members.”

This is a victory for tribal sovereignty and reaffirms the unique authority and responsibility that the tribes share for the 31 in-lieu and treaty fishing access sites up and down the Columbia River. We would also like to acknowledge and congratulate Yakama Nation tribal attorney Tom Zielman for his hard work on this case on behalf of Mr. Jim. The four CRITFC member tribes filed a joint *amicus* brief in support. This ruling was a victory for not only Mr. Jim, but all four Columbia River treaty tribes.



Paul Lumley
YAKAMA



The Dipnetter

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