CRITFC Executive Director’s Message

A FOCUS ON CLEAN WATER

Last month, CRITFC was honored with a Washington DC visitor: Lisa P. Jackson, the Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Due to the importance of the meeting, CRITFC invited leaders from all the Columbia River tribes.

Over 20 tribal leaders representing the 15 tribes of the Columbia River Basin participated in the meeting, including CRITFC tribal leaders. The meeting went extremely well. Many items were discussed including toxics reduction efforts, environmental justice, climate change, Columbia River Treaty issues, coal transportation, and mining issues.

Of particular focus were tribal concerns about Columbia River Basin water quality standards and whether they are protective enough for tribal communities. Thanks to tribal efforts, Oregon now has the strictest water quality standard in the nation. This was accomplished by using a CRITFC fish consumption survey completed in 1994 that showed that tribal members eat much more fish than the national average. We are now working hard to amend water quality standards in Washington and Idaho as well.

Last week, I was asked to make a presentation at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians conference. I spoke on the need for water quality standards to be protective of tribal members who eat more fish than the general public. An ATNI resolution was also passed that thanks EPA for denying Idaho’s proposed standards. The resolution supports using accurate tribal fish consumption rates and taking these rates into account in fish contamination studies in Idaho.

These topics will also be discussed at the upcoming CRITFC-hosted Columbia River Toxics Reduction Workshop. We hope to develop a framework for decision-making and action on toxic reduction efforts in the Columbia Basin.

This is hard work. The CRITFC Watershed Department has been leading this effort with strong support from CRITFC’s four member tribes. We are also getting very important support from the 57 tribes of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians. Columbia River Indians have always held sacred our water and our salmon. Part of CRITFC’s mission is to protect the watersheds where fish live. Making sure the water that flows in those watersheds is clean and pure is of the utmost importance, not just for the fish, but for human health and our tribal culture, too. By gaining allies from all levels of government, we are making a difference for the future so that our water and our salmon will be free of contamination.
**River Flow Update**  
*Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC meteorologist/hydrologist*

The May 22 update from NOAA’s National Weather Service indicates another big snowmelt episode just caused tributary rivers to rise. This was the second major peak flow in the lower Columbia. That means river currents will speed up. River conditions could be dangerous for fishers. The third and main peak flow of the lower Columbia will occur in late May then recede to lower summer flows.

Snowpack accumulation is still good in the Washington and North Oregon Cascades (110-175% of normal), steady in the Canadian Rockies (90-125% of normal), and melting in the Clearwater (50-110% of normal) and Umatilla (50-90% of normal). All the low elevation snow is gone. Current snow levels are about 5,000 feet.

**Fisheries Update**  
*Stuart Ellis, CRITFC harvest biologist*

The spring chinook are still passing Bonneville Dam. Treaty and non-treaty mainstem fisheries are both managed with harvest rates based on the actual (not forecast) river mouth run size. The run has come in lower than forecast, but it should be fairly close to last year’s spring run size. Tribal ceremonial permit fishing is complete with 9,700 fish taken with ceremonial permits. Platform and hook-and-line fishing is continuing. Commercial sales have been allowed for these fish. The tribes have been hopeful that they can allow some commercial gillnet fishing, but so far the run size has not been quite high enough to fit a gillnet fishery in with the other harvest that has occurred. If it turns out to be possible, the tribes would like to schedule a commercial gillnet fishery in early June, however it is too early in the season to make this determination. We will get word out when the tribes make any decisions regarding a commercial gillnet fishery. To get fisheries announcements on your cell phone as a text message, send a text message to the number 55958 with "critfc" in the body of the text. Calling the number will not work. This must be done as a text message from your cell phone.

CRITFC’s current and past employees and commissioners at the organization’s 35th anniversary celebration on April 27. The event featured speakers, an honor song, a salmon dinner, and the sharing of many memories from CRITFC’s past three and half decades of work and dedication to support tribal treaty fishing rights and the salmon resource.
The annual Columbia River Indian Fishers Expo is just a month away. The theme of this year’s event is “moving quality in your fishing business to the next level.”

Whether you fish by scaffold, dip nets, gillnets, or hook-and-line this year’s Columbia River Indian Fishers Expo has something for you. Come and learn not only the fundamental practices of taking care of your fish and river safety and marketing but also how to keep more from what you sell and maximizing your profits.

This one-day event on July 27 at the Hood River Inn (just to the east of the Hood River bridge) will give you and your family or crew some great choices to improve your family business. The event will include a breakfast and lunch, drawings, and much more.

Some of the workshops and displays planned for this year include:

**River Safety**
- Demonstrations
- The latest in personal safety gear and how to use it
- Latest safety information
- Options on where to buy safety materials and devices

**Taking Care of the Fish**
- Demonstrations
- Proper icing, ice slushing, and packing your fish.
- The latest in gilling, gutting, and icing your fish using for example: the “princess cut” when the customers ask.
- Options on where to buy supplies, knives, boxes and other materials.

**The Art of the Sale**
- The “How to” workshop to help you increase your profits through promoting your family business and keep customers coming back by applying these fundamentals
  - Preparation
  - Presentation
  - Delivering
  - Follow-up

**Fishing Resources**
- Purchasing options
- Local, regional, and nation options
- Fishing supplies, scales, vacuum pack machines

**Expo Displays/Presentations**
- Engine repair
- Boat design (In process)
- Fiber glassing (In process)
- Inexpensive mobile credit card processing solutions

(Presentations listed are still tentative and may change before the event.)

Look for next month’s Dipnetter with even more details, information, and schedules for this annual event.
Want to learn how to increase the value of your fish harvest and hear the latest 2012 fall fishery outlook?

Would you like to hear about fishing and treaty rights from tribal leadership and ask them questions?

Would you like to learn how to start taking credit cards at your over-the-bank fish sales?

How about learn the latest filleting and food safety techniques?

You can do all of these and more at the third annual Columbia River Fisher’s Expo—a conference and trade show designed with the specific needs of tribal fishers in mind. The Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission is hosting the Expo for all Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce fishers on July 27 from 8:30am to 5pm at the Hood River Inn.

Visit [www.critfc.org/expo](http://www.critfc.org/expo) for a complete list of classes and vendors and the latest information.