Government-to-Government Dialogue and Cooperation
Dianne Barton, CRITFC Water Quality Specialist

Government-to-government relations between the tribes and federal and state governments are an important function to protect tribal sovereignty as well as to ensure that the tribes’ expectations of how the governments fulfill their trust responsibilities are known to a wide range of government leaders.

Several government-to-government meetings took place last month. At a recent meeting at the CRITFC Enforcement office in Hood River, US Attorney Amanda Marshall and her office met with Oregon tribal police chiefs. Among the meeting topics were the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and its application in Indian County, the Oregon Tribal Law & Order Act, federal prosecutions, and BIA Special Law Enforcement Commissions (SLECs).

Tribal representatives also travelled to Washington DC to meet with federal officials and elected representatives on a variety of issues. CRITFC Chairwoman N. Kathryn Brigham met with Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn, where she explained why the tribes need the BIA to help manage the in-lieu and treaty fishing access sites and assist with tribal housing along the Columbia River.

▲ U.S. Attorney Amanda Marshall [in red] and her office met with Oregon tribal police chiefs at the CRITFC Enforcement office in Hood River.
▼ During a recent CRITFC delegation to Washington DC, CRITFC chairwoman Kat Brigham (umatilla) met with Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Kevin Washburn.

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

April 2013
Honing First Salmon
JEREMY FIVECROWS, CRITFC PUBLIC INFORMATION

One of the Columbia River tribes’ most important ceremonies is the First Salmon Feast. This salmon ceremony occurs before open fishing takes place. It is why every fishing season begins with a ceremonial harvest for fishers to catch salmon for use in these ceremonies. The timing of these feasts matches the arrival of the salmon to each longhouse.

The feasts honor Salmon for being the first to volunteer when Creator asked all the plants and animals for a gift to help humans survive.

In accordance with this sacrifice, salmon are honored each year upon their return. The ceremony always begins with a blessing and drinking of water, followed by a prayer of thanksgiving and the serving of the salmon. This ceremony reinforces the central role that salmon and water play in the health and culture of the tribal people in the Columbia Basin.

2013 Spring Fishery Update
NICOLE CHARLEY, CRITFC FISH MGMT. DEPT.

The winter gillnet fishery ended March 21. Its timing and catch size was similar to last year. The sturgeon guideline was reached in the Bonneville and John Day pools, but not in The Dalles pool.

The 2013 ceremonial permit fisheries are currently underway. The ceremonial permit fisheries are expected to go on for several weeks. As of March 22, only 122 spring chinook had passed Bonneville, but this is a lot more than the count of only 22 fish by that date last year.

The tribes have decided to keep the fisheries downstream of Bonneville closed until at least April 15, when a new run size estimate will be made. This is done in part to help ensure that fish are able to pass upstream for ceremonial permit and subsistence fisheries in Zone 6. The tribes will open the fishing areas downstream of Bonneville when they believe it is the right time so that the fishery fits in with Zone 6 fishing efforts.

Commercial spring chinook sales are currently closed as tribal rules do not allow the sale of spring chinook during periods when ceremonial permit fisheries are occurring. Check your tribe’s regulations for more information specific to you.

CRITFC Officers and Commissioners

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**A Rising River: 2013 River Forecast**

*Kyle Dittmer, CRITFC Hydrologist-Meteorologist*

The spring snowmelt (or “freshet”) causes rising high water levels in the Columbia River and its tributaries each year. This condition helps get salmon smolts downriver quickly, but also makes it dangerous for fishers. CRITFC monitors river conditions during the year and creates forecasts to inform fishers of the predicted timing and nature of the freshet. River flow will increase in late April, peak in late May (flow will be fastest during this time), then slowly recede through June.

We started the season with a brief El Niño event, which is a Pacific Ocean condition that gives the Pacific Northwest warm, dry winters and sour ocean conditions. We quickly transitioned to neutral conditions since last summer. However, this winter has been more like El Niño, with less snowpack and warmer temperatures. This means that the freshet will be slightly less than normal this spring, but still favorable for juvenile salmon migrating out to the ocean and for returning adults. Recent late winter storms have helped to restore the snowpacks. The March 19 NOAA-National Weather Service river spring-summer forecasts are at 92% of normal.

CRITFC generates its own forecast, predicting this year’s river flow will be 102% of normal. The NOAA forecast has moved toward the CRITFC forecast recently.

Snowpack accumulation is doing well in the Washington and North Oregon Cascades (110 - 175% of normal), near normal in the Canadian Rockies, but poor in Idaho and northeast Oregon (25 - 90% of normal).

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**Invasive Fish Collection Program**

*Blaine Parker, CRITFC Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator*

This fishing season, CRITFC’s Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator Blaine Parker will pay fishers for invasive/undocumented fish species caught by Indian fishers in Zone 6. Examples of such fish would be grass carp, Atlantic salmon, northern pike, tiger muskies, and other non-established fish species. Such fish are likely escapees from private ponds and lakes (grass carp or tiger muskie) or strays from commercial aquaculture (Atlantic salmon), or even aquarium releases.

In 2012, CRITFC received three credible reports (clear photographs or fish in hand) of large adult grass carp from Zone 6. This first fish caught in Bonneville Pool, Parker was able to contact the fisher directly and purchased the fish for scientific examination. The fish was found to be an adult female with fully developed eggs—a serious concern given that all grass carp imported into Washington or Oregon are required to be sterile. The other two fish identified by photographs were caught in John Day Pool.

Given the importance of collecting physical evidence for analysis, Parker began a program that pays fishers for these invasive fish species. If at all possible it is important that are kept fresh on ice and not frozen. This is important as freezing can damage soft tissue, particularly the gonads.

For a list of the major invasive species found in the Columbia River Basin, including photos and descriptions, visit www.critfc.org/invasive

If you catch one of the species listed above, contact Blaine at 503-731-1268 or via email at parb@critfc.org.
Food Sovereignty

At a recent CRITFC-hosted workshop, the Food Safety Modernization Act was presented. This legislation could possibly impact tribal sales of fish sold directly to the public. Attorneys and staff are investigating whether this new federal law dictates regulations that Indian fishers would be subject to. The tribes are working to schedule consultation with the Food and Drug Administration on the implementation of this new law. They hope to get ahead of this by exploring ways to enhance their sovereignty over the processing of food products that are sold to the public. The goal is to not only support our fishers but to provide the public with safe, wholesome fish while protecting tribal sovereignty.

The tribes have been clear in their dedication to promoting food safety. They directed CRITFC to work with fishers to incorporate quality handling techniques into the processing of the treaty catch. Over 350 fishers have voluntarily taken HACCP food safety classes, representing over 5,000 hours of instruction.

Incorporating food quality handling techniques into the processing of the treaty catch is paying off:

- The quality of the treaty catch is recognized by wholesalers and consumers, creating greater demand.
- Despite the economic downturn of the past five years, the prices Indian fishers receive for tribal-caught salmon actually increased.
- Tribal-caught salmon can now be found in local, regional, and national markets, including top supermarkets and restaurants. Last year, Indian fishers provided over one million servings of salmon to consumers.

This increased level of visibility also comes with higher expectations from the public. Food safety awareness has greatly increased over the last few years as the public wants to ensure food is processed in a safe manner and in accordance with a regulatory framework. We want to make sure that any food safety regulations tribal members are subject to come from their own tribe.