EPA

COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN
RESTORATION PROGRAM

Columbia River Basin Restoration Program Working Group Meeting

OCTOBER 26, 2021

Columbia River Basin Restoration Program Working Group Meeting

Facilitated by U.S. EPA Regions 10 and 8 with support from Greg Frey, The Council Oak

October 26, 2021
12:30 PM – 4:00 PM PST
Video Conference

Attendees:

Aaron Borisenko, Oregon Dept. of Environmental Quality (OR DEQ)
Adriane Borgias, Washington State Dept. of Ecology (WA Ecology)
Alan Kolok, University of Idaho
Alexis Baker, Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation (USRTF)
Andrea Sumerau, Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians
Andrew Swanson, Oregon Association Clean Water Agencies
Andy James, University of Washington
Ann Farris, OR DEQ
Austin Baldwin, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
Ben Jarvis, Idaho Dept. of Environmental Quality (ID DEQ)
Bob Hall, University of Montana
Brian Muegge, Salmon Safe
Brian Wolcott, Salmon Safe
Brittney Wendell, Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Center (PNWPPC)
Bryan DeDoncker, Clark County, WA
Carl Merkle, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Catherine Corbett, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership
Cavan Gerrish, Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
Chris Riggers, Clearwater Farms
Dan Kent, Salmon Safe
Dena Horton, Pacific Northwest Waterways Association
Dennis Daw, USRTF
Dianne Barton, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC)
Dorrie Sutton, City of Vancouver, WA
Eileen Naples, OR DEQ
Elaine Placido, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership (LCEP)
Eugene Foster, OR DEQ
Francis Tran, U.S. EPA Region 8
Gina Hoff, BOR
Greg A., Citizen
Gunnar Johnson, U.S. EPA Region 10
Heather Hendrixson, Hood River SWCD
Ian Waite, USGS
James Mc Ateer, QA/QC Consulting, LLC
James Medlen, WA Ecology
James Willacker, USGS
Jan Boll, Washington State University
Jason Pappani, ID DEQ
Jennifer Bayer, USGS
Jennifer Morace, USGS
Jim McKenna, Governor Kate Brown's Natural Resource Office
John Sirois, Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT)
Julie Carter, CRITFC
Justin Maynard, Clark County, WA
Kaileigh Westermann-Lewis, City of Keizer, OR
Karl Rains, WA Ecology
Karma Anderson, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Kate Wilson, Montana Dept. of Natural Resources and Conservation
Kathleen Conn, USGS
Kathryn VanNatta, Northwest Pulp and Paper Association
Kelly Ferron, WA Ecology
Ken Clark, Nez Perce Tribe
Keri Handaly, City of Gresham, OR
Kevin Masterson, Stony Creek Consulting
Kevin Scribner, Salmon Safe
Kirk Shimeall, Cascade Pacific Resource Conservation & Development

Kris Carre, U.S. EPA Region 10
Kris Olinger, City of Vancouver, WA
Lara Christensen, Oak Lodge Water Services
Laura Buelow, U.S. EPA Region 10
Laura Gephart, CRITFC
Laura Shira, Yakama Nation
Laurie Porter, CRITFC
Leslie Bach, Northwest Power and Conservation Council
Lisa Naas Cook, Columbia River Gorge Commission
Lorri Epstein, Columbia Riverkeeper
Lucas DuSablon, U.S. EPA Region 10
Margaret Drennan, Washington State Dept. of Agriculture (WA AGR)
Mark Peterschmidt, WA Ecology
Michelle Mullin, U.S. EPA Region 10
Mike Mulvey, OR DEQ
Nancy Munn, NOAA Fisheries
Nanette Nelson, University of Montana
Ofelio Borges, WA AGR
Paula Calvert, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)
Ralph Meyers, Idaho Power Company
Roy Iwai, Multnomah County
Sanchai Dean,
U.S. EPA - Office of Inspector General
Scott Hauser, USRTF
Stacy James, Citizen
Stacy Webster-Wharton, BPA
Steve Waste, USGS
Susan Fricke, Eugene Water and Electric Board
Susan Hess, Columbia Insight
Suzanne Skadowski, U.S. EPA Region 10
Tana Atchley Culbertson, Nesika Wilamut
Tate Libunao, University of Idaho
Tim Counihan, USGS
Trevor Selch, Montana Dept. of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks
Warren Colyer, Montana Trout Unlimited
Whitney Fraser, Lodestone Consulting
William Hobbs, WA Ecology
Yvonne Vallette, U.S. EPA Region 10

EPA Columbia River Team:
David Gruen, U.S. EPA Region 10 [ORISE Fellow]
Erik Peterson, U.S. EPA Region 10
Greg Frey, The Council Oak
Krista Mendelman, U.S. EPA Region 10
Mary Lou Soscia, U.S. EPA Region 10
Michael Fischer, U.S. EPA Region 8
Michelle Wilcox, U.S. EPA Region 10
Nic Taylor, U.S. EPA Region 10
Peter Brumm, U.S. EPA Region 8
Peter Murchie, U.S. EPA Region 10
Sherwanda Beck-Atkinson, U.S. EPA Region 10

PowerPoint slides for the following presentations are available online:
https://gaftp.epa.gov/region10/columbiariver/TRWG/Meetings/2021October/

1. Informal Update: Scott Houser, Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation
2. Informal Update: Jan Boll, Washington State University
3. Informal Update: Dan Kent, Salmon Safe & Chris Riggers, Clearwater Farms
4. Informal Update: Jennifer Morace, U.S. Geological Survey
5. Keynote Speaker: Dianne Barton, National Tribal Toxics Council
6. Update from the EPA Region 8/10 PCB Team
7. Grant Program Success Stories: Laura Shira, Yakama Nation
8. Grant Program Success Stories: Alan Kolok, University of Idaho
9. Grant Program Success Stories: Bob Hall, University of Montana

Welcome, Agenda Review, and Teams Overview

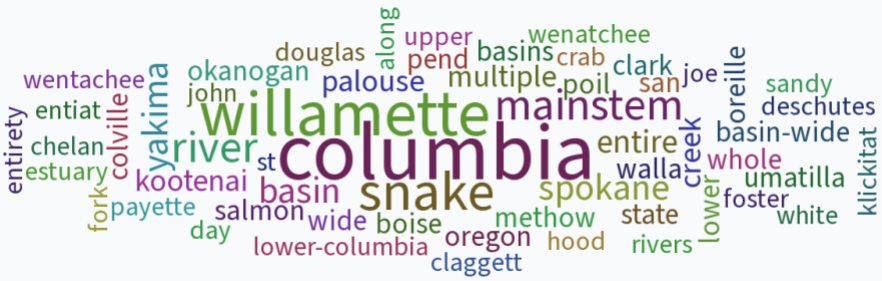
Mary Lou Soscia welcomed Working Group members and presenters to the meeting and provided a brief history of the Columbia River Basin Restoration Working Group. The October 26th meeting was the fourth virtual CRBRP Working Group meeting. The next meeting is expected to occur in May 2022. Sanchai Dean, a Special agent with EPA Office of the Inspector General, gave a short talk. The Office of Inspector General investigates allegations of waste, fraud, and abuse involving EPA programs. To report potentially fraudulent activity or to talk with an agent, contact the EPA OIG hotline.

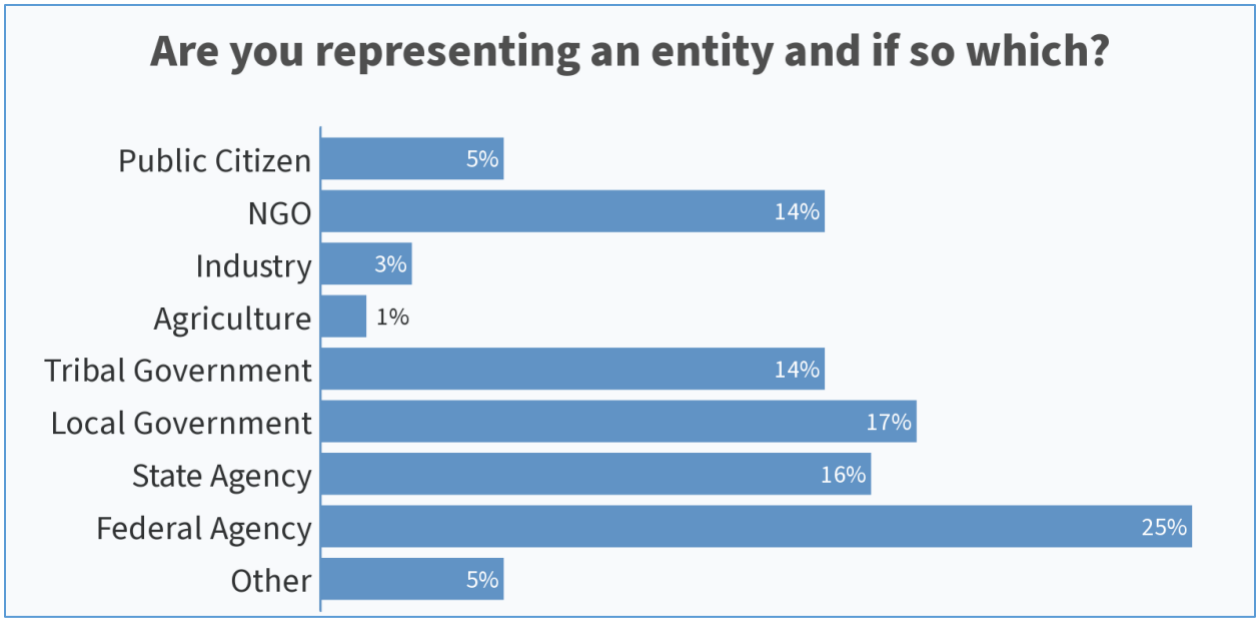
Icebreaker

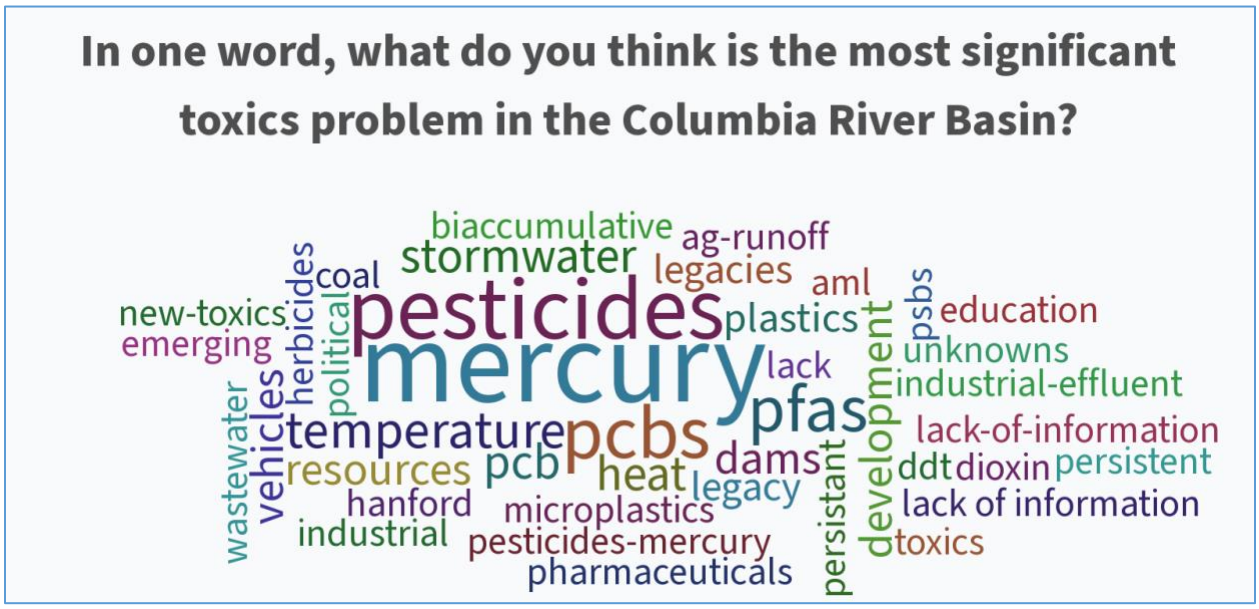
Greg Frey, The Council Oak

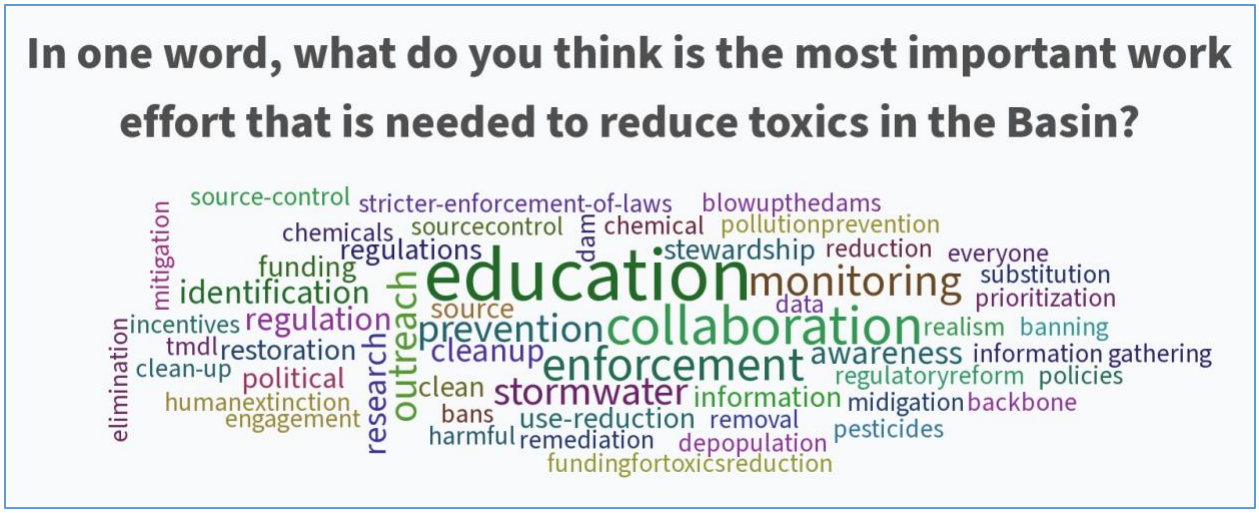
Greg led attendees in an icebreaker activity to gather input about who was participating in the meeting and their priorities for reducing toxics in the Columbia River Basin. Using an online collaboration tool, Greg asked attendees a series of five questions. Meeting attendees provided input via their web browsers and as input was received, the tool took those results and populated graphics in the PowerPoint presentation in real time. The resulting word clouds and graph are copied below.

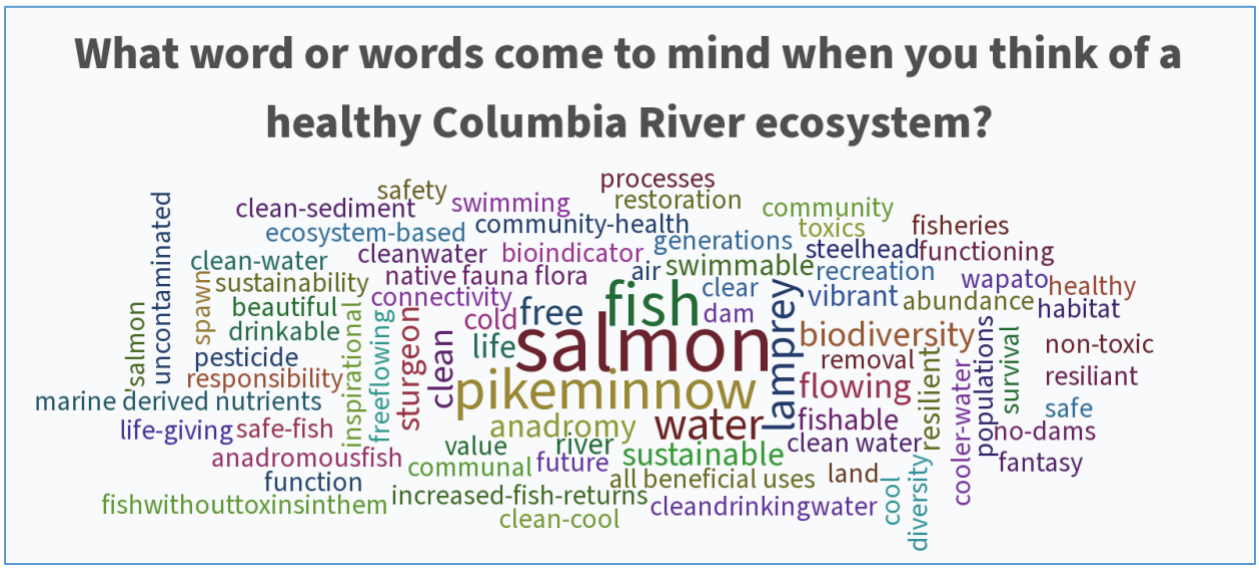
Which watershed in the Basin does your work focus on? (Willamette, Snake, Yakima, Spokane, Columbia River Mainstem, Kootenai, other)




Are you representing an entity and if so which?
Public Citizen
5%
NGO
14%
Industry
3%
Agriculture
1%
Tribal Government
14%
Local Government
17%
State Agency
16%
Federal Agency
25%
Other
5%


In one word, what do you think is the most significant toxics problem in the Columbia River Basin?
biaccumulative
ag-runoff
stormwater
legacies
aml
coal
herbicides
political
pesticides
plastics
psbs
education
new-toxics
emerging
mercury
lack
unknowns
industrial-effluent
wastewater
vehicles
temperature
pcbs
pfas
development
lack-of-information
resources
pcb
heat
dams
ddt
dioxin
persistent
hanford
legacy
lack of information
industrial
microplastics
pesticides-mercury
toxics
pharmaceuticals
persistant





Informal Updates From Attendees

Scott Hauser, Upper Snake River Tribes Foundation

Scott provided a summary of the court case between the Shoshone Bannock Tribes and FMC Corporation (FMC). During the plant's operation, 22 million tons of hazardous waste were generated and disposed on tribal land. In 1990, EPA designated the site as a Superfund site. In 1997, FMC and the Shoshone Bannock Tribes signed a consent decree that required FMC to pay $1.5 million per year to the Tribes. In 2002, FMC closed the plant and stopped the annual payments. The tribes sued to restart the payments, and the dispute was arbitrated in several court cases. In 2019, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ordered FMC to pay $20 million in missed payments and restart annual payments of $1.5 million to the Tribe as specified in the 1997 consent decree. Scott plans to provide an update at the next Working Group meeting on a recently launched monitoring program developed to evaluate water quality trends and assess conditions relative to land use and climate change.

Jan Boll, Washington State University

Jan introduced a new National Science Foundation Research Traineeship program focused on community engagement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs through interdisciplinary learning. The goal is to train up to 60 graduate students to implement a community engagement model of graduate education to provide students an impactful and innovative learning experience, to develop practical and diverse skill sets, and build an understanding of varied cultural perspectives to prepare them for career paths in multiple sectors. The program is focused on: equity, risk, distribution of power; human health and ecosystem health consequences of anthropogenic change; landscape dynamics and integrated solutions. The program plans to focus on the Columbia River Basin, including developing a Columbia River Basin Living Atlas. More information can be found here: https://www.nrt-rwc.wsu.edu.

Jen Bayer, U.S. Geological Survey

Jen provided a quick update on the Columbia River Basin Restoration Program Monitoring Subgroup, which she has agreed to co-chair. In June 2021, EPA hosted a webinar and formed a monitoring subcommittee with a focus on collaboration around the basin and eventually developing a long-term monitoring plan. The Monitoring Subgroup is in the early phases, and the next steps include developing goals and objectives for their work. Individuals interested in participating on the Monitoring Subgroup should contact Jen at jbayer@usgs.gov or 503-201-4179.

Ben Jarvis, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (ID DEQ)

Ben gave an update on ID DEQ toxics use reduction efforts and Pollution Prevention program. The program had an ongoing engagement with schools attempting to transition to safer lab education, included green chemistry. ID DEQ has also been collaborating with WA Ecology to build a regional focus on green chemistry. The program is looking to focus on outreach and encourage companies to switch from toxic chemicals. The OSHA 7225 standard training is a good framework for helping companies engage and identify toxics use in their work.

Karl Rains, Washington Ecology

Karl spoke about the work of the Spokane River Regional Toxics Task Force's efforts to address PCBs. He highlighted recent PCB removal that was completed with the assistance of a specially trained dog to sniff out PCB sources near Gonzaga. The Task Force funded an effort to assess and reduce inadvertent PCBs and is working to identify fish advisories due to PCBs. To inform its own work, the Task Force is interested in better understanding how PCBs are being addressed in other parts of the country. Washington State Department of Ecology is working with property owners to eliminate PCBs from going into the watershed.

Dan Kent, Salmon-Safe & Chris Riggers, Clearwater Farms

Salmon Safe is focused on outreach efforts to grain growers and other agricultural producers in the interior Columbia River Basin. Dan introduced Chris Riggers, a fifth-generation farmer, to discuss his family's efforts to certify Clearwater Farms, their dry land grain farm on the Camas Praire in North Central Idaho, as the first Salmon-Safe farm in the state. The Salmon Safe certification prohibits the use of chemicals and pesticides that negatively affect fish and water quality. Chris highlighted their switch away from toxic farm chemicals and their use of no-till planting, which helps improve soil health and minimizes runoff.

Jennifer Morace, U.S. Geological Survey

Jennifer provided updates on three USGS projects being managed by researchers at the Oregon Water Science Center related to toxics in the Columbia River Basin. In 2019 and 2020, USGS collected species of resident fish in the Columbia Slough and are analyzing tissue and blood for 50 target PFAS compounds. USGS is finalizing the data analysis and expects to publish a report in 2022. In the Hanford Reach of the mainstem Columbia River, USGS and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service researchers collected white sturgeon from five sites and analyzed the composite fish tissue samples for organochlorine pesticides, industrial or personal care products, polybrominated diphenyl ehter (PBDE) congeners, and polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) congeners. Concentrations of several chemicals exceeded human-health benchmarks, especially for concentrations of DDT and its degradants, and PCB congeners; a report is expected to be published very soon. In the third project, a team of researchers is working to develop a library of spectral reflectance for planktonic and benthic algae to be able to use satellite data to detect problematic taxa that can create harmful algal blooms. The library and method will be described in a forthcoming report. A paper by Slonecker et al. (2021) details basic library development for 13 Cyanobacteria genera.

Michelle Mullin, U.S. EPA Region 10

EPA is proposing a new PCB Rule. There is a proposed change to the cleanup options under 40 CFR 761.61(b), and updates to the allowable chemical extraction methods.

Keynote Speaker:

Dianne Barton, Chair, National Tribal Toxics Council

Dianne Barton, Chair of the National Tribal Toxics Council (NTTC) and the Water Quality Coordinator, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, spoke about how EPA can protect all people from toxics through the 2016 reauthorization of the Toxics Substances Control Act (TSCA) which requires EPA to evaluate sensitive subpopulations. The NTTC is an EPA Tribal Partnership Group, supported by the EPA Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, that works on issues related to chemical safety, toxic chemicals, and pollution prevention for Indigenous people through the USA. Most recently, the NTTC has provided feedback to EPA on their ongoing risk evaluations of chemicals under the 2016 revisions to TSCA. Risk evaluations of population susceptibility to toxics should also consider health disparities such as those shown for tribes in data from the Centers for Disease Control which reveals that tribal members living on Indian land experience worse health outcomes compared to the general public. In 2019, the Ninth Circuit found that EPA violated TSCA by excluding legacy uses in their TSCA risk assessments. Legacy use is an environmental justice issue and will now be included in TSCA risk assessments.

On June 30, 2021, the EPA announced the agency's planned path forward for TSCA chemicals. EPA's draft 2022-2026 Strategic Plan calls for all aspects of the Agency's work to emphasize environmental justice communities.

Updates from the EPA R8/R10 PCB Team

Natalie Cannon, Francis Tran, and Michelle Mullin, EPA

EPA's PCB Coordinators from both Region 8 and Region 10 presented on the general characteristics and behaviors of PCBs, strategies to prevent PCBs from entering the Basin, and shared lessons learned from PCB monitoring and remediation. PCBs enter our environment through legacy sources, such as transformers, fluorescent lights, voltage regulators and other electrical equipment, as well as modern sources, like the inadvertent creation of PCBs, and fish food. EPA, local governments, building owners, and industries should all work together towards a PCB-free Columbia River through proper handling, removing and disposal, pollution prevention, monitoring, source tracing, regulation, and clean up.

The presenters provided a few lessons learned from two PCB remediation sites, Big Springs Creek, Lewiston, Montana, and Stimson Lumber Site, Bonner, Montana. In both cases remediation took 10+ years and cost millions of dollars. Information about regulated and recommended PCB concentration levels in water can be found on the EPA website.

Columbia River Basin Restoration Program Grants, Success Stories, and Updates

EPA will soon be announcing a second grant funding competition to reduce toxics throughout the Columbia River Basin. EPA will be issuing two Request for Applications (RFA) soon; one for the Lower Columbia River Estuary and one for the Middle and Upper Columbia River Basin. For more updates please visit EPA's Columbia River website.

EPA has published success stories describing the great work being done by grantees to monitor, assess, and reduce toxics throughout the Basin.

Laura Shira, Yakama Nation

A vision of a long-term monitoring program was born when Yakama Nation staff were not able to effectively answer the Yakama tribal leader question, "Are toxics in the Columbia River getting better or worse?" The monitoring project study area includes 600 miles of the mainstem Columbia River from the Canadian border to Bonneville Dam. This project has many partners including USGS, Washington Ecology, and Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Laura described how Yakama Nation Fisheries and their partners have identified and evaluated existing data and studies, and have worked to develop a community engagement and outreach plan. Other experts are encouraged to join the collaborative efforts. Future goals include developing detailed workplans and pilot studies, implementing the long-term monitoring program, and adaptive management. The team will provide a draft of the framework to this Working Group in Spring 2022, with the hope of receiving input.

Lorri Epstein, Columbia Riverkeeper

Lorri Epstein discussed the highs and lows Columbia Riverkeeper experienced in how to respond to the pandemic. Their original workplan involved inviting students to an in-person campus among other in-person events. With the pandemic in full swing, most of the work had to be redesigned in a virtual setting. Columbia Riverkeeper created two bilingual pollution prevention factsheets (Spanish and English). They also developed a bilingual radio show, "Conoce tu Columbia" for Radio Tierra, highlighting pollution prevention issues. Columbia Riverkeeper hosted several community education webinars. Recordings of the webinars can be found on their website. Columbia Riverkeeper also developed four Pollution Prevention Curriculum modules, targeted for middle school students focused on Household Contaminants, Stormwater, Riparian Zones, and Microplastic. They encourage Working Group members to share the curriculum with educators.

Alan Kolok, University of Idaho

Alan provided an update on the University of Idaho's Crayfish and Mercury in the Columbia River Basin project. This project monitors mercury, a priority pollutant in the Columbia River Basin, in the tissues of crayfish captured by volunteer community members who are part of a citizen engagement and education campaign. This past summer the first of two sampling campaigns kicked off. Initially, the project planned to sample in the Boise and Spokane River Basins, but they were able to expand the geographic scope due to the large number of individuals who wanted to participate in the community science project. Over 100 volunteers from nine organizations visited 55 sites from across the basin and

collected 350 animals. Although data analysis has just begun, initial results suggest that mercury concentrations vary widely among sites. If you or your organization are interested in getting involved in future sampling efforts, please check out their website: https://crayfish.nkn.uidaho.edu/.

Bob Hall, University of Montana

Bob spoke on the University of Montana and Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes' efforts to understand mercury dynamics in Flathead Lake. This project involves monitoring levels of methylmercury in the Flathead Lake food web and outreach to Tribal communities about fish consumption advisories. Several sampling events have been conducted to collect Daphnia (zooplankton), Mysis shrimp, invasive lake trout, and native lake whitefish. The range of animals will help provide researchers with a full picture of the impact of mercury on the Flathead Lake food web. The next steps in this project are to analyze the sampling results and develop a Community Engagement Plan to help inform Tribal members of the risks and benefits of eating fish caught from Flathead Lake.

End of Meeting Summary

Thank you to everyone who was able to attend our October 26, 2021, Columbia River Basin Restoration Program Working Group meeting, with 95 individuals in attendance. While remote meetings have their challenges, we appreciate the opportunity to engage with participants from across the entire Basin, especially those who might otherwise be unable to travel. The next Columbia River Basin Restoration Program Working Group meeting is expected to occur in May 2022 and will likely be offered in a similar remote format.

Reminder: EPA expects to release a new Request for Applications for the next round of funding under the Columbia River Basin Restoration Funding Assistance Program. Please visit EPA's website for more information.