

Columbia River Basin Restoration Working Group
Virtual Meeting Summary
December 15, 2025 // 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM Pacific

Disclaimer: EPA is distributing this information solely as a public service. Meeting contributors are responsible for the quality of their contributed information. Some of the projects discussed are supported in part by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The views expressed are solely those of the attendee and do not necessarily reflect those of the Agency. EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned in the presentations or summary. Inclusion of information about a website, an organization, a product or a service does not represent endorsement or approval by EPA, nor does it represent EPA opinion, policy or guidance unless specifically indicated. EPA does not exercise any editorial control over the information that may be found at any non-EPA website.

Attendees

- Austin Baldwin, USGS Idaho Water Science Center
- Kylie Ball, Nez Perce Tribe Water Resources Division
- Dianne Barton, CRITFC
- Bradley Blackwell, WA State Department of Ecology
- Negonne Blair, CTUIR
- Jan Boll, Washington State University (Rivers, Watersheds, Communities Program)
- Whitney Bowman, EarthCorps
- Cheyenne Brown, WA Dept. of Ecology
- Peter Brumm, USEPA Region 8
- Paula Calvert, Bonneville Power Administration
- Kristine Carre, EPA Region 10
- Tyler Chatriand, EPA Region 10
- Emerson Christie, Washington State Department of Health
- Lara Christensen, Oak Lodge Water Services District
- Ken Clark, Nez Perce Tribe
- Jade Clinkenbeard, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality
- Warren Colyer, Trout Unlimited
- Catherine Corbett, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership
- Hilary Cosentino, Mid-Snake Toxics Reduction Grantee, The Freshwater Trust
- Neil Crescenti, The Nature Conservancy
- Bryan DeDoncker, Clark County Public Health, WA
- Ryan Dunbeck, Nez Perce Tribe Water Resources Division
- Sherrie Duncan, Yakama Nation Fisheries
- Mariah Durglo, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes
- Jamie Ferrill, Charles Sturt University
- Heidi Fleury, Western Montana Conservation Commission
- Rich Francis, EPA R10 SEMD, RPM for Bradford Island.
- Whitney Fraser, Lodestone Environmental Consulting, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Manuel Garcia-Jaramillo, Oregon State University

- Lara Gephart, CRITFC
- Stephanie Gill, WA Ecology
- Catherine Gockel, EPA Region 10
- David Gruen, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Marie Hallinen, EPA Region 10
- Keri Handaly, Conf Tribes of Grand Ronde (Office of Ceded Lands)
- Shauna Hanisch-Kirkbride, WA Dept of Ecology in Vancouver
- Chris Hathaway, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership
- Brian Haug, Bureau of Indian Affairs, NW Region, Portland
- Paige Haxton-Evans, Oregon DEQ
- Pat Heins, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Heather Hendrixson, Northwest Power and Conservation Council.
- Rob Hibbs, Oregon Department of Agriculture
- William Hobbs, WA Ecology
- JoAnn Holloway, Mineral Resources Program USGS
- Dena Horton, Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA)
- Genny Hoyle, Kootenai Tribe
- Latonya Jackson, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Mark Jankowski, EPA Region 10
- Jeremy Johnson, Alta Science and Engineering
- Kristen Jordan, Western Montana Conservation Commission
- Yvette Joseph, Transboundary Manager and CERCLA Coordinator for the Colville Confederated Tribes
- Caroline Keever, Upper Columbia United Tribes
- Dan Kent, Salmon-Safe
- Heather King, Willamette Riverkeeper
- Tamara Knudson, Alta Science & Engineering
- Lisa Kusnierz, EPA Region 10
- Amber Lamet, Long Tom Watershed Council, Eugene Oregon
- Krista Lammers, Western Montana Conservation Commission
- Cady Lancaster, Oregon State University
- Evan Leacox, WSU
- Katie Lethe, The Freshwater Trust
- Casey Lewis, Western Montana Conservation Commission
- Kevin Masterson, Stony Creek Consulting, supporting Oregon ACWA
- Michelle McGrath, Salmon-Safe
- Jason McLellan, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Violet McJunkin, EPA OIG
- Carl Merkle, Confederated Umatilla Tribes
- Patrick Moran, USGS Tacoma
- Brian Muegge, Salmon-Safe
- Mason Murphy, Confederated Umatilla Tribes
- Stephanie Murphy, Western Montana Conservation Commission
- Kelsey Nakama, Tualatin Riverkeepers
- Jesse Naymik, Idaho Power Company

- Elena Nilsen, USGS Oregon
- Robin Parker, EPA Region 10
- Katia Rar, EPA Region 10
- Kevin Scribner, Salmon-Safe
- Laura Shira, Yakama Nation
- Cailin Sinclair, Oregon State University
- Carolyn Smith, EPA Region 10
- Evan Smith, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation
- Susan Spalinger, Alta Science & Engineering, Inc.
- Rebecca Stevens, Coeur d'Alene Tribe
- Brooke Stowell, Nez Perce Tribe Water Resources
- Andrea Sumerau, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon
- Dorie Sutton, City of Vancouver
- Andrew Swanson, representing Oregon ACWA, and Clackamas WES
- Will Tiedemann, Idaho Conservation League
- Margaret Todd, Spokane Tribe of Indians
- Jordan Tollefson, NorthWestern Energy
- Scott Schlieff, EPA Region 10
- Andy Ulven, Montana Department of Environmental Quality
- Brett VandenHeuvel, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Davis Washines / Yellowash, Yakama Nation
- Michelle Wilcox, EPA Region 10
- Ellen Woods, Oregon DEQ

EPA Program Updates

Catherine Gockel, EPA Region 10 Geographic Programs Section Manager (gockel.catherine@epa.gov), **Michelle Wilcox**, (wilcox.michelle@epa.gov), & **Greg Frey**, Council Oak (gfrey@thecounciloak.com)

Catherine Gockel, Manager of the EPA Region 10 Geographic Program Section, provided an update on the Columbia River Basin Restoration Program (CRBRP). She noted the EPA remains supportive of geographic programs such as the CRBRP, acknowledging the CRBRP's role in advancing clean water outcomes and fostering cross-agency partnerships. She reaffirmed the vision of the Working Group, which is grounded in Clean Water Act Section 123. Through strong partnerships, the CRBRP continues to act as a catalyst for reducing toxic pollution and supporting communities, fish, wildlife, and water quality across the Basin.

She acknowledged that the EPA and the broader federal government have experienced significant staffing changes this year, resulting in reduced staff capacity. FY2026 will be the final year of Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding for the CRBRP. The program received \$79 million in infrastructure funding distributed over five years, which enabled a substantial expansion of activities, including support for CRBRP Toxic Reduction Lead and Tribal Lead grants. Once infrastructure funding ends, the program will rely on regular appropriations and is expected to operate at a smaller scale, with fewer and smaller grants available.

Michelle Wilcox, lead for the CRBRP Grant Program, provided an overview of funding assistance to date. Since the start of the program, 64 grants, totaling more than \$91 million, have been awarded ([Columbia River Basin Restoration Funding Assistance Program Website](#)), which includes the recent Science and Monitoring grants. That said, infrastructure funding is winding down, and absent a significant increase in program funding, EPA does not anticipate announcing a new funding opportunity in the near term, although EPA is continuing to fund already awarded grants.

Columbia River Basin Working Group Updates

Working Group participants expressed interest in reconvening in person. The EPA team is exploring the possibility of hosting an in-person spring Working Group meeting on 21–22 April 2026, in Portland, Oregon, pending leadership approval. The tentative agenda includes a Toxics Monitoring Subgroup (TMS) workshop and site tour.

Partner Updates

The meeting included an open forum for partners and participants to share announcements, upcoming events, and recent project updates.

Heather Hendrixson, Northwest Power and Conservation Council (hhendrixson@nwcouncil.org), reported that the Council is soon releasing a draft of the Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program. Once approved for release, the draft will be available for public comment for at least 60 days. Following the comment period, revisions will be incorporated, with an expected release date sometime in May 2026. Visit the [Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Fish and Wildlife Program website](#) to collaborate further.

Kevin Scribner, *Salmon-Safe* (kevin@salmonsafe.org), announced that the [Columbia Basin Collaborative Integration and Recommendation Group](#) is expected to reconvene in January 2026. The collaborative had been dormant due to funding limitations but has secured a portion of Pacific Coast Salmon Recovery Fund funding to resume operations.

Chris Hathaway, *Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership* (CHathaway@estuarypartnership.org), shared updates on recent project milestones. EPA has approved the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan for the Lower Columbia River. In addition, a schoolyard stormwater project was completed with EPA CRBRP funds at Rigler Elementary School in Portland, Oregon. The project removed nearly 9,000 square feet of impervious surface, constructed 1,500 square feet of stormwater management facilities, planted more than 1,400 plants including 24 trees, installed about 20 boulders, and incorporated environmental education by engaging students in planting activities. Four additional projects are planned for 2026 under their Toxics Reduction Lead grant.

Will Hobbs, *WA Dept of Ecology Senior Environmental Scientist* (william.hobbs@ecy.wa.gov), announced an upcoming meeting, 15–17 April, of the Pacific Northwest chapter of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry. The two-day regional scientific meeting, which includes participants from Washington, Oregon, British Columbia, Alaska, and Idaho, will be held in Leavenworth within the Columbia River Basin. Visit the webpage for the [SETAC North America 46th Annual Meeting](#) for more information.

Dianne Barton, *Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission* (bard@critfc.org), announced a [National PFAS Conference](#) in Tucson, AZ from 8–10 June 2026.

Transboundary Grantee Panel: WA-ID-MT Border Projects

Projects described below are supported in part by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The views expressed are solely those of the grantees and do not necessarily reflect those of the Agency. EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned in this summary.

Tyler Chatriand, *Mining Advisor with EPA Region 10* (chatriand.tyler@epa.gov), opened the panel by providing background on the [Transboundary Watershed Grant Program](#). The program was established in response to mining activities in British Columbia that have existing or potential impacts on rivers that flow into the United States.

Mining-related pollution in these watersheds has been a longstanding concern, and in 2024, Congress appropriated \$2 million to support monitoring, management, and interagency coordination in transboundary watersheds. These funds were distributed through a new competitive grant program for states and tribes (separate from the Columbia River Basin Restoration Program). Eight grants were awarded in 2025, including five within the greater Columbia River watershed.

Panelists included:

- **Andy Ulven**, *Montana Department of Environmental Quality, Water Quality Planning Bureau Chief* (andrew.ulven@mt.gov)

- **Jade Clinkenbeard**, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Watershed Analyst (Jade.Clinkenbeard@deq.idaho.gov)
- **Genny Hoyle**, Kootenai Tribe, Environmental Director (genhoyle@kootenai.org)
- **Whitney Fraser**, Lodestone Environmental Consulting, Principal Scientist (fraser@lodestonellc.com)
- **Yvette Joseph**, Colville Confederated Tribes, CERCLA Coordinator and Tribal Member (yvette.joseph.env@colvilletribes.com)

Overview of Transboundary Mining Pollution and Community Impacts

Panelists described transboundary mining pollution as a significant and persistent issue affecting multiple watersheds downstream of mining operations in British Columbia. Key pollutants of concern include selenium, nitrates, lead, and zinc. In Montana, data indicate that a substantial majority of selenium and related pollutant loads originate from upstream mining activities. These pollutants pose risks to aquatic life, fisheries, and water quality.

In Idaho, concerns center on contaminants entering the Kootenai River system from British Columbia, affecting aquatic ecosystems, recreation, fisheries, and local economies. Tribal representatives emphasized the impacts to culturally significant native fish species and the broader food web, particularly the effects of nitrates on foundational ecological processes.

Additional concerns were raised regarding legacy contamination from historic smelting operations in British Columbia, including lead and zinc pollution affecting Lake Roosevelt. Panelists also highlighted risks associated with potential expansions of mining operations in British Columbia and the potential consequences of tailings dam failure for downstream ecosystems and salmon recovery efforts.

Field Work and Data Collection Activities

Panelists described a range of field activities and project stages. Some projects are in their planning phases, with water sampling plans under development in coordination with state agencies. Other efforts involve seasonal fieldwork, including multi-day sampling campaigns, laboratory coordination, and fish tissue collection during spawning periods.

Some panelists noted that their work builds on extensive existing monitoring datasets. In some cases, grant funds are being used to address regulatory and procedural needs, such as water quality standards development, Clean Water Act processes, engagement with the International Joint Commission, and coordination with British Columbia on area-based management planning.

Communicating the Importance of Transboundary Work to Local Communities

Panelists emphasized the importance of explaining how water quality protection supports beneficial uses such as recreation, fisheries, and local economies. In Montana, messaging often focuses on the economic value of clean water and healthy aquatic ecosystems.

Tribal representatives highlighted treaty rights and the importance of sustaining healthy fisheries for cultural and subsistence purposes. Effective communication often requires one-on-one engagement, particularly in agricultural communities where certain pollutants may be perceived differently, such as

selenium. Panelists noted that emphasizing the long-term consequences of unmitigated pollution and the role of data in understanding and addressing impacts can help build local understanding and support.

Effective Partnerships and Collaboration

Panelists shared examples of successful collaboration across jurisdictions. Participation in the Upper Columbia United Tribes Transboundary Mining Conference was cited as a valuable forum for bringing together tribes, nonprofit organizations, scientists, advocates, youth, elders, and, more recently, representatives from the mining industry.

Interagency data sharing among state agencies, tribes, and federal partners such as the U.S. Geological Survey has resulted in more robust datasets and improved reporting, including incorporation of tribal data into integrated water quality reports.

Lessons Learned for Other Transboundary Efforts

Panelists emphasized that addressing transboundary mining pollution is a long-term effort spanning decades. Success requires patience, sustained collaboration, and recognition that solutions take time to develop. Participants encouraged other communities to take advantage of collaborative opportunities and to plan for long-term engagement.

International Coordination Considerations

Panelists noted that international collaboration presents ongoing challenges, particularly due to evolving policy in Canada. Maintaining respectful engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including government entities, communities, and industry, is essential.

Grantee Lightning Talks: Science & Monitoring

Seven projects received EPA Columbia River Basin Restoration Program Science and Monitoring Grants, totaling \$10.3 million, to strengthen toxics research and monitoring across the basin. The grants support the characterization of spatial and temporal trends, identification of contaminant pathways, and the development of novel methods, including indicator chemicals, prioritization approaches, and biological effects assessment.

These presentations are supported in part by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The views expressed are solely those of the grantees and do not necessarily reflect those of the Agency. EPA does not endorse any products or commercial services mentioned in these presentations.

Brooke Stowell, Nez Perce Water Quality Program Coordinator (brookec@nezperce.org):

The Nez Perce project is located in the Clearwater River watershed in north central Idaho, within the middle to upper Columbia River Basin. The effort builds on three previous project phases that evaluated multiple contaminants in tributaries, mainstem surface waters, and biotic tissues.

The Phase 4 project focuses on novel methods to assess the biological effects of complex chemical mixtures in the water column. Polar organic chemical integrative samplers (POCIS) will be deployed twice (high flow and base flow) at 24 sites, each deployment for a period of 30 days, absorbing complex chemical mixtures in the water. Extracted samples will be analyzed by USGS laboratories and evaluated using ToxEval and ToxMixtures tools, with comparisons to the ToxCast database.

Question: Do you expect much of the passive sampler-measured chemicals to be comparable to water based screening values (if they exist)?

Answer: The purpose of the POCIS samplers is to collect data on complex mixtures that are currently not represented in water quality guidelines. A major issue preventing establishment of water quality guidelines for chemicals of concern is the lack of understanding on how complex chemical mixtures affect the biological integrity of an aquatic ecosystem. One of the goals of using this approach is to determine chronic exposure concentrations of chemicals of concern. This information will be critical to establishing baseline information for development of future water quality guidelines in the Columbia River Basin.

Cailin Sinclair, OSU Postdoc Scholar supporting Freshwater Trust (cailin.sinclair@oregonstate.edu):

OSU's completed project in the Willamette River Basin used dragonfly larvae to measure freshwater mercury contamination. Sampling happened at 104 sites across land cover gradients, with engagement of more than 1,200 community scientists. Modeling results showed relationships between mercury concentrations and land cover types.

Building off this completed project, The Freshwater Trust is collaborating with OSU to scale this work to four focal watersheds across the Columbia River Basin. The effort will develop predictive models, assess mercury risk basin wide, identify source pathways using stable isotopes, and evaluate the effects of management actions on mercury risk.

Will Hobbs, WA Dept of Ecology Senior Environmental Scientist (william.hobbs@ecy.wa.gov):

Washington Department of Ecology is leading a new project that builds on existing monitoring to assess legacy contaminants entering the Columbia River mainstem from major tributaries in Washington. The first project goal is a synoptic survey of contaminant concentrations and loads across tributaries ranging from the Walla Walla River to the Kettle River.

A second project goal is to establish a baseline dataset to better understand resident fish movement. This work leverages long term fish tissue monitoring, ambient water quality stations, and collaboration with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. The project will run through 2029 and is intended to generate data usable by multiple basin partners.

Pat Heins, ODEQ State Biosolids and Water Reuse Coordinator (pat.heins@deq.oregon.gov):

This project addresses PFAS in biosolids and seeks to determine whether land application of biosolids in Oregon contributes significant PFAS contamination in agricultural settings. Sampling is focused on four representative sites, including three within the Columbia River Basin. The study evaluates PFAS

concentrations in applied biosolids, three depths in the soil (surface soils, root zones, vadose zones), and crops. Similar sampling will occur on control fields that have no history of biosolids application. Analyses include EPA Method 1633 and advanced techniques developed at Oregon State University to help identify PFAS sources.

Paige Haxton-Evans, ODEQ Toxics and Groundwater Quality Monitoring Program Coordinator

(Paige.HAXTON-EVANS@deq.oregon.gov):

This project focuses on tributary fish toxics monitoring in Oregon tributaries to the Columbia River. Phase 1 is centered on laboratory method development for PFAS in fish tissue and surface water, as well as PCB congeners and mercury. Beginning in spring 2026, the project will collect composite fish tissue and water samples, targeting resident species in lower and upper trophic levels, and recreational fish species when available.

Sampling will occur near tributary mouths, when accessible, and will include PFAS, PCBs, and mercury. Field work will continue through June 2027, with laboratory analysis conducted by ODEQ. Data is expected to be compiled by mid-2028.

Manuel Garcia-Jaramillo, PhD, OSU Assistant Professor (manuel.g.jaramillo@oregonstate.edu):

This multi-year project involves a yearlong monitoring of contaminants in the lower Columbia River through monthly passive sampling conducted across approximately 170 river miles. Samples are analyzed for PFAS and hundreds of known and previously unrecognized emerging organic chemicals using advanced targeted and non-targeted analytical methods. These data are used to characterize spatial and temporal trends, identify contaminant pathways, and support predictive risk modeling.

Potential biological impacts are assessed using zebrafish embryo and human cell-based assays to evaluate toxicity and biological activity. The project places strong emphasis on community engagement through collaboration with a multi-stakeholder advisory board and public outreach efforts, including webinars, newsletters, infographics, and stakeholder briefings.

Question: Will the zebrafish be exposed to samples with or without chorion?

Answer: Zebrafish embryos are removed (>95%) from the chorion to ensure consistent and sensitive exposure assessments.

Maggie Todd, Spokane Tribe Water and Fish Biologist (margaret.todd@spokanetribe.com):

The Spokane Tribe project focuses on contaminant monitoring in the Upper Columbia and Spokane Rivers. Phase 1 was completed in 2024, with a report recently approved for public release. The project evaluated water quality, suspended sediment, bottom sediment, crayfish tissue, and biofilm to identify potential exceedances of water and sediment quality standards and to assess contaminant transport and bioaccumulation.

Phase 2 shifts its focus to tree swallow eggs as indicators of contaminants and reduces monitoring sites to 10 locations. Sediment particle traps were successfully deployed and retrieved in 2025, capturing

suspended sediments for metals, methylmercury, and PCB analysis. Phase 2 sampling will continue through 2027, with reporting anticipated in 2028.

Jason McLellan, Colville Tribes Subdivision Manager (jason.mclellan@colvilletribes.com):

This project examines the effects of selenium and other metals and metalloids on burbot health in Lake Roosevelt. The study builds on longstanding concerns related to upstream mining contamination in the Upper Columbia River. Research questions focus on differences in metal profiles across reservoir zones, comparisons with reference lakes, and relationships between contaminant concentrations and physiological stress responses. Field sampling is planned for winter 2026 during the burbot spawning period, with analysis and reporting extending through 2029.

Question: Do Colville members that consume burbot have high selenium levels? Any plans for biomonitoring of tribal members?

Answer: We are not monitoring selenium levels among the Colville membership. The primary concern regarding Colville members consuming burbot is mercury. We will be evaluating mercury in our burbot sampling and supply that information to the membership.

Resource:

- EPA Tools & Resources Webinar: 6PPD & 6PPD-quinone: <https://www.epa.gov/research-states/epa-tools-and-resources-webinar-series>

Toxics Monitoring Subgroup Updates

Robin Parker, EPA Region 10 (parker.robin@epa.gov), **Lisa Kusnierz**, EPA Region 10 (kusnierz.lisa@epa.gov), **Ashley Zanolli**, EPA Region 10 (zanolli.ashley@epa.gov), **Patrick Moran**, USGS (pwmoran@usgs.gov), **Katia Rar**, EPA Region 10 (rar.katia@epa.gov), **Laura Shira**, Yakama Nation Fisheries, (shil@yakamafish-nsn.gov), **Sherrie Duncan**, Yakama Nation Fisheries, (sherrie@skyenviron.com)

Lisa Kusnierz explained the purpose of the TMS, which is to develop a community of practice that shares monitoring information and leverages activities within and beyond EPA-funded grants. She emphasized that the TMS supports the coordination of a basin-wide network of toxics monitoring projects and assists in collecting, publishing, and synthesizing data.

[Screening Values and Monitoring Dashboard Updates](#)

Patrick Moran provided an update on the ongoing development of screening values. These values originate from the need for consensus-based screening values to support consistent interpretation of monitoring data across the basin, particularly for prioritization and adaptive management. As part of this effort, the subgroup is assessing 538 chemicals being monitored. Out of those 538, they are determining which need screening values, and how to generate such screening values.

For metals, ecological screening values will generally align with existing water quality guidelines, since metals are already well characterized as priority pollutants. Sediment and tissue benchmarks for chemicals remain to be determined, as these are more challenging to establish, though existing

sediment benchmarks may be leveraged. Work on ecological screening value selection has resumed, and development of human health screening values will occur in coordination with partners.

Katia Rar, GIS specialist for Region 10 EPA, provided an overview and example usage of the [Columbia River Basin Toxics Monitoring Dashboard](#). The dashboard visualizes the data collected in the [Toxics Monitoring Project Tracking Matrix](#). Together, they are intended to advance the understanding of toxics monitoring efforts in the Basin, help facilitate coordination and collaboration among toxics monitoring projects, and assist with identifying information gaps. For Dashboard project extent refinement requests, please email: gs-crbtoxmon@usgs.gov.

Columbia River Basin Monitoring Strategy Vision Update

Robin Parker presented that the CRBRP, in partnership with the TMS and USGS, is developing a comprehensive toxics monitoring strategy to assess water quality trends and support pollution reduction across the Basin. The strategy's vision is to coordinate monitoring efforts among federal, state, tribal, and local partners to track toxic pollutants that threaten human health and aquatic life. The TMS is currently refining the strategy based on extensive partner input, and an updated Monitoring Strategy will be shared at the Spring TMS Workshop and Working Group meetings.

After reviewing the Toxics Monitoring Strategy Vision and Draft Strategic Goals (which are: (1) sustaining partnerships; (2) identifying and prioritizing pollutants; (3) assessing the status, trends, and locations of priority pollutants; and (4) applying new tools and approaches), Robin summarized key themes from partner feedback:

- **Responsibilities Beyond the Monitoring Strategy:** Partners noted several important topics that fall outside the scope of the Monitoring Strategy, including linking monitoring results directly to toxics-reduction actions; communication of results to public audiences; integration of BMP effectiveness monitoring with program evaluation; governance structures for strategy implementation; and long-term funding sustainability. These issues are being addressed through other components of the CRBRP, Working Group efforts, or partner-led initiatives.
- **Tribal Considerations:** Feedback emphasized that tribal values, sovereign rights, and culturally significant species must be central to the strategy. The updated approach will reflect tribal sovereignty and cultural priorities by focusing on species of particular significance and strengthening partnerships and ongoing tribal engagement.
- **Community Engagement and Public Communication:** Partners highlighted the need for accessible information, transparency regarding monitoring locations and parameters, and support in interpreting results. In response, the TMS is developing periodic status and trends reports, enhancing the monitoring dashboard, and supporting data interpretation.
- **Emerging Contaminants and Historical Resources:** Partners requested prioritization of contaminants identified in the 2020 [Columbia River Contaminants of Concern Framework](#) and incorporation of historical studies. The updated strategy will reference this framework and work to integrate additional datasets to better address transboundary contamination.

- **Pathway and Source Monitoring:** Partners expressed interest in strengthening monitoring of intermediate discharge pathways and enhancing connections between monitoring results and potential sources.
- **Monitoring Protocols and Quality Assurance:** Partners supported the development of standardized but flexible monitoring protocols and Quality Assurance approaches that can accommodate local environmental conditions and project-specific needs.
- **Governance and Coordination:** Feedback included questions regarding roles and responsibilities, particularly related to governance, federal responsibilities in interstate waters, and coordination among diverse partners.

Certain feedback items will not be incorporated into the Monitoring Strategy at this time, including the addition of cyanotoxins and expansion of the PFAS geodatabase or inclusion of microplastics.

Yakama Nation Basin-wide Implementation Plan

Laura Shira and Sherrie Duncan informed the group that the Yakama Nation has finalized a draft implementation plan for a basin-wide monitoring program. The plan is intended to be adaptive, recognizing that monitoring needs may shift over time based on funding availability, regional priorities, and broader political or environmental changes. Since 2015, the Yakama Nation team has collaborated with multiple partners to develop the current implementation framework.

The plan outlines a governance structure designed to remain fluid and responsive, helping clarify further structure and what various arms the governing body does. At the highest level, an executive board would provide oversight and ensure regular engagement with subject-matter experts and relevant partners. The plan also addresses strategies for securing funding, outlines an anticipated development timeline, and describes other essential components needed to support long-term basin-wide monitoring.

Resources:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation: <https://www.yakama.com/>
- Yakama Nation Fisheries: <https://www.yakamafish-nsn.gov/restore/projects/columbia-river-mainstem-water-quality-monitoring-program>
- Land of the Yakamas: [https://yakamafish-nsn.gov/landoftheyakamas](https://yakamafish-nsn.gov/LandOfTheYakama)