

Columbia River Basin Restoration Working Group Meeting

Hybrid Meeting Summary

In-person at DoubleTree Hotel in Portland, OR and Online

April 23, 2026 // 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM PT

Attendees (in-person and online)

- Greg Anderson, U.S. EPA Region 8
- Jade Alvey, EPA
- Jenn Ambrose, Oregon Department of Agriculture
- Christopher Ayres, City of Vancouver
- Austin Baldwin, USGS
- Petra Baldwin, Chesapeake Research Consortium
- Kylie Ball, Nez Perce Tribe Water Resources Division
- Dianne Barton, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Jakub Bednarek, Washington Department of Ecology
- Negonnekodoqua Blair, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Adriane Borgias, Washington State Department of Ecology
- Peter Brumm, EPA R8
- Julie Carter, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- RODNEY Cawston, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Lara Christensen, OLWS.org
- Megan Christian, Oregon Healthy Authority - Healthy Fish Consumption Program
- Catherine Corbett, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership
- Hilary Cosentino, The Freshwater Trust
- Dana Crosby, Oregon Health Authority
- Bryan DeDoncker, Clark County Public Health
- Ryan Dunbeck, Nez Perce Tribe
- Sherrie Duncan, Yakama Nation Fisheries
- Meghan Dunn, EPA Region 10
- Mariah Durglo, Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes
- Kai Elgethun, R10 EPA LSASD RAB
- Nathan Enos, Washington Ecology
- Claudette Enos, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Bryan Fiedorczyk, EPA
- Heidi Fleury, Western Montana Conservation Commission
- Greg Frey, The Council Oak
- Tara Galuska, Recreation and Conservation Office
- Laura Gephart, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Catherine Gockel, EPA R10
- Janelle Groff, Flathead Lake Biological Station
- David Gruen, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- Kalea Gurfield, Oregon State University
- Chris Hathaway, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership
- Miranda Hawkes, Long Tom Watershed Council
- Heather Hendrixson, Northwest Power and Conservation Council
- Will Hobbs, WA ECY
- JoAnn Holloway, U.S. Geological Survey
- Roy Iwai, Multnomah County
- Mary James, Nez Perce Tribe
- Brian Johnson, City of Vancouver
- Jeremy Johnson, Alta Science and Engineering
- Yvette Joseph, Colville Confederated Tribes
- Caroline Kever, Upper Columbia United Tribes
- Dan Kent, Salmon-Safe
- Tamara Knudson, Alta Science and Engineering
- Krista Lammers, Western Montana Conservation Commission
- Ralph Lampman
- Cady Lancaster, Oregon State University
- Casey Lewis, Western Montana Conservation Commission
- Justin Lini, Council Oak
- Andy Marquez, Washington State Department of Ecology
- Kevin Masterson, Stony Creek Consulting
- Michelle McGrath, Salmon-Safe
- Patrick Moran, US Geological Survey

- Mary Rose Morigeau, CSKT
- Keri Morin Handaly, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Brian Muegge, Salmon-Safe
- Stephanie Murphy, Western Montana Conservation Commission
- Linda Nemeth, Nez Perce Tribe
- Sydney Nilan, Upper Willamette Stewardship Network
- Robin Parker, CRBRP EPA Region 10
- Sean Payne, U.S. Geological Survey
- Jennifer Peterson, Oregon DEQ
- Jamie Pinkham, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission
- Elaine Placido, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership
- Melody Poland, US EPA
- Nathaniel (Nat) Scholz, NOAA Fisheries, Northwest Fisheries Science Center (retired)
- Irvin Schultz, NOAA Northwest Fisheries Science Center
- Kevin Scribner, Salmon-Safe
- Kelsey Shaw Nakama, Tualatin Riverkeepers
- Laura Shira, Yakama Nation
- Evan Smith, CSKT
- Mary Lou Soscia, Retired US EPA
- Julann Spromberg, Northwest Fisheries Science Center
- Brooke Stowell, Nez Perce Tribe
- Karin Stutzman, Oregon Dept of Agriculture
- Dorie Sutton, City of Vancouver WA
- Andrew Swanson, Oregon ACWA and Clackamas WES
- Jordan Tollefson, Northwestern.com
- Krishna Viswanathan, EPA R10
- Chris Weer, City of Vancouver
- Michelle Wilcox, EPA
- Ellen Woods, Oregon DEQ
- Ashley Zanolli, EPA Region 10
- Jasmine Zimmer-Stucky, Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership

Welcome and Opening

Robin Parker, EPA Columbia River Basin Restoration Working Group Lead (parker.rob@epa.gov), **Catherine Gockel**, EPA Region 10 Geographic Programs Section Manager (gockel.catherine@epa.gov) & **Krishna Viswanathan**, Director of the EPA Region 10 Water Division

Robin Parker welcomed attendees, reviewed the meeting objectives, and outlined the topics to be discussed at the Working Group Meeting.

Catherine Gockel welcomed attendees and expressed her enthusiasm for meeting Working Group members in person, as this is the first in-person meeting since the Working Group met in Spokane two years ago.

Meeting Objectives

- Review progress and effectiveness of toxics reduction projects across the Basin.
- Obtain individual feedback to prioritize future Working Group projects and actions in consideration of funding uncertainty.
- Improve in-person connections and collaboration among Working Group members
- Establish “right-sized” subgroups with volunteer leads and member commitments.

Keynote Presentations

Jaime Pinkham, Senior Advisor to the Executive Director, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission & **Krishna Viswanathan**, EPA Region 10 Water Division Director

Krishna Viswanathan welcomed Jaime Pinkham, Senior Advisor to CRITFC’s Executive Director and a Nez Perce citizen. Jaime Pinkham spoke about the importance of remembering the long-term nature of the Working Group’s efforts. His remarks included:

- It is important to remember that cycles of change are natural in our work.

- When we focus on short-term challenges, we lose sight of the generational nature of this work.
- To succeed, we must continue to build our fellowship here, both to expand the Working Group's capabilities and to strengthen each other.
- We must continue to build people's resilience, particularly that of the most vulnerable.

Krishna Viswanathan observed that the Working Group should look to other great watersheds and river basins, for how to scale our programming, and how to communicate our use of public resources to obtain results. By using the talent and expertise within our community, we can chart a path forward to the next era of our collaboration.

Breakout Discussions: Overview

Breakout group discussions were held to brainstorm priority challenges/suggestions for Working Group actions in the post-Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding landscape and to prioritize projects and actions to direct the Working Group's future activities. Six breakout groups discussed the following topics.

- Group 1: Agriculture & Pollution Prevention
- Group 2: Stormwater & Green Infrastructure
- Group 3: Mining & Cleanups
- Group 4: Monitoring & Data Collaboration
- Group 5: Outreach, Communications & Behavior Change
- Group 6: All Virtual Participants

The following categories of activities emerged as priorities across the Working Group breakout discussions:

Communicate Value

- Demonstrate BMP effectiveness [Group 1]
- Measurable storytelling [Group 4]
- Consistent message: elevator pitch [Group 5]
- Public-facing website [Group 5]
- Tell success stories [Multiple Groups]

Coordinate Activities

- Monitoring protocols [Group 1]
- Leverage partnerships [Group 1]
- Inventory risks, decision trees for mines [Group 3]
- Data/spatial system and alerts [Group 4]
- Platform for sharing information and practices [Group 5]

Develop Tools for Doing the Work

- Pesticide Takeback events [Group 1]
- BMP placement, design, and maintenance resources [Group 2]
- Programmatic decision tools for partners addressing mines [Group 3]

Make Data Accessible

- Identify emerging contaminant risks [Group 1]
- Water quality data accessibility [Group 2]

Grow the Network

- Universities [Group 1]
- Trusted organizations [Group 1]
- Municipalities [Group 5]
- Use train-the-trainer sessions [Group 1]

The groups explored challenges, actions to tackle them, and steps the Working Group or subgroups could take to implement those actions. Following the breakouts, individual attendees at the meeting discussed the ideas and voted on the highest priorities. The top 5 priorities are listed below. Since there are cross-linkages among these priorities, note takers merged some to highlight how they can be combined to achieve greater benefits for the Basin.

The Top 5 Priorities	Votes	Pct
1. Establish a Platform for Sharing	21	16.3%
2. Use Data to Show BMP Effectiveness	15	11.6%
3. Data Management	12	9.3%
4. Communicate the Value of Columbia River Restoration	11	8.5%
5. Secure/Provide Funding for Green Infrastructure	10	7.8%

Priorities 1 and 3: Establish a Platform for Sharing and Use it to Manage Data

Steps to Take

- Build a data and spatial repository where all Columbia River Basin partners can host their data and make it accessible to others.
- Provide tech support and point of contact data stewards.
- Use the Working Group's expertise to advise on the development of tools and share examples.
- Provide training on accessing and uploading data (i.e. Water Quality Exchange (WQX)).
- Make data accessible to Working Group members through new project alerts.
- Develop ways (possibly on the same data sharing platform) to coordinate internally by hosting contact lists and resources such as toolkits.

Priorities 2 and 5: Use Data to Show Green Infrastructure and BMP Effectiveness and Secure Additional Funding.

Steps to Take:

- Use data to show effectiveness of program actions when applying for diverse financing, for prioritizing new projects, and sharing case studies.
- Evaluate early adopters of BMPs to show performance over time.
- Quantify benefits, either through estimates or monitoring.
- Measure results that meet or beat agency needs for information.
- Use data to educate potential partners on Integrated Pest Management (IPM)/ Best Management Practices (BMP) to prioritize toxics reduction and BMP implementation.
- Use data to make business arguments for BMPs to communicate value and inform funders.

Data Can Also Coordinate Action Across the Basin:

- Targeted effectiveness monitoring should be used to evaluate whether BMP placement decisions are achieving their intended outcomes and to refine future placement decisions.
- Placement should be coordinated among entities and across ecoregions and watersheds, with dedicated funding to support implementation.
- Strong communication and outreach activities are needed to support implementation and public understanding.

Priority 4: Communicate the Value of Columbia River Restoration

Steps to Take:

- The approach used by “Follow the Water” and its statewide collaborations is a good model to study.
- Establish a website on a non-governmental site. The website should be interactive, include maps, highlight partnerships, and outline benefits for partners.
- Identify audiences and segment content accordingly (leadership/funders, the public, local governments).
- Improve messaging consistency by developing an elevator pitch that explains what the Columbia River Basin Restoration Program is and why it is important.
- Organize a partner-led informational event to familiarize lawmakers with the program.
- Use data to tell the story of restoration or “Measurable Storytelling.”
- Collect and prepare success stories (such as BMPs) that resonate with the public.

Review of Project Progress

Robin Parker, EPA Columbia River Basin Restoration Working Group Lead (parker.robin@epa.gov),

David Gruen, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (david.gruen@deq.oregon.gov),

Keri Handaly, Project Manager, formerly City of Gresham (keri.handaly@grandronde.org),

Roy Iwai, Multnomah County (roy.iwai@multco.us),

Kevin Masterson, Stony Creek Consulting (kmasterson@stonycreek.consulting)

Robin Parker gave an overview of the Program’s activities. Since 2020, the Columbia River Basin Restoration Program has awarded 64 grants totaling nearly \$91 million to state, Tribal, and local governments, universities, and nonprofits, leveraging an additional \$119 million from Basin partners. The program has advanced 18 Toxics Reduction Lead and Tribal Lead awards, along with \$10 million in new science and monitoring awards. Since 2023, the [EPA Columbia River Basin Funding Assistance Program](#) has supported measurable progress, including irrigation upgrades expected to reduce phosphorus by approximately 8,000 pounds starting in 2025. The EPA funded expanded pesticide stewardship and sampling efforts, enrollment of 96 acres in vegetative filter strips, and supported the completion of Oregon’s PFAS Strategic Plan. During that time, partners have supported the development of long-term fish tissue and toxicity monitoring, implemented major green infrastructure projects, and invested in septic and stormwater toxics reduction in Montana and across the Basin. Additional work is underway to advance large-scale septic system analysis, demonstrating continued

momentum in toxics reduction, monitoring, and watershed restoration across the Basin. And these are just some examples. Moving into the tenth anniversary of the program, there is a need to consider how to shift from smaller, less connected projects focused on outputs to more connected, Basin-wide impacts and positive environmental outcomes.

David Gruen presented on the work Oregon DEQ has completed with support from the Toxic Reduction Lead Grant. Thanks to the \$6 million Toxic Reduction Lead Grant, Oregon's Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Program improved pesticide education and outreach, encouraging voluntary efforts to keep pesticides out of the aquatic environment. This work has resulted in water quality improvements in the Hood River and Walla Walla Watersheds. DEQ has also used this funding to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) that reduced erosion from agricultural lands in the Willamette Basin. DEQ has also used these funds for eight Small-Scale Distressed Property Cleanups. Oregon is also implementing a [Statewide PFAS Action Plan](#) that went into effect in June 2025.

DEQ's work will continue after the expenditure of IJA funds; PSP and Focused Agricultural solutions receive Oregon general fund appropriations, and the Small-Scale Distressed Properties Cleanup receives some funding through EPA Brownfields and CERCLA Section 128(a). Needs for the latter program will exceed available funding, however. Lastly, the PFAS Strategic Action Plan will continue using a combination of local, state, and federal funding.

Keri Handaly and **Roy Iwai** discussed the Clean Rivers Coalition's successful pilot outreach programs funded by the EPA Columbia River Basin Restoration Program. The Latine Landscaper Training program was a series of facilitated workshops with videos for Spanish-speaking landscapers to reduce pesticide exposures among workers and to understand the negative impacts of "Weed & Feed"- type products on stormwater. The Level Up Your Lawn program used Community-Based Social Marketing to effectively sort "Weed & Feed" product users and test digital campaign materials. Significant reductions in chemical use and increased use of overseeding practices resulted. These successful pilot programs will be implemented statewide with the new funding the Coalition has received over the next four years. Spanish language training videos are available at https://www.pesticide.org/espanol#tab=espanol_videos. For more information, contact NCAP Tommy Diaz, tdiaz@pesticide.org

Kevin Masterson presented on the Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies' (OR ACWA) 2-year EPA-funded grant project to reduce PFAS and phthalates in municipal wastewater. The project equipped public wastewater utilities with the resources, tools, and data to assess and reduce the discharge of these chemicals from industrial, institutional, and domestic sources. The project supported pollution prevention outreach, industrial and commercial wastewater source identification, and monitored PFAS in wastewater for 10 small cities in the Basin. A public outreach toolkit, technical assistance resources, a PFAS monitoring data report, and other information produced from this grant are available to the public at: <https://oracwa.org/pfas-and-phthalate-reduction-project/>.

Toxics Monitoring Strategy Report-Out and Feedback

Ashley Zanolli, EPA Region 10 Oregon Operations Office (zanolli.ashley@epa.gov)

The Draft Toxics Monitoring Strategy is a comprehensive, 20-year, collaborative approach to monitoring toxic pollutants to assess trends and inform water quality protection and restoration activities across jurisdictions and sub-basins in the Columbia River Basin. The draft Strategy is consistent with Clean Water Act Section 123, and addresses status and trends assessment in water quality, including what to monitor, where, and how. The draft 2027–2047 Monitoring Strategy was discussed extensively at the TMS workshop on April 22.

Attendees at the TMS workshop provided individual feedback on the draft Strategy. They discussed the priority chemicals to monitor, as well as media that serve as exposure pathways. Together, these are used to generate Indicators of Risk. Attendees also provided individual feedback on monitoring locations and ways to measure short and long-term success of the four goals in the draft strategy. Attendees at both the TMS workshop and broader Working Group meeting expressed support for continuing the development of a 20-year Basin-wide monitoring strategy and annual implementation plan for partners.

Proposed priority chemicals for monitoring

List subject to change as often as every five years as informed by five-year status and trend reports.

Category		Chemicals	Media	Temporal and Spatial Sampling Considerations	Pathways*	Indicates?
PBTs	Banned	PCBs, DDT	Fish tissue	Spatially distributed and slow to change	I, M, U/S	Human and aquatic life risk
	Current	MeHg		Spatially distributed; ecological drivers; moderate change rate	All	
Metals		Zn, Cd, Cu, Pb, Se, As, Co	Based on flow chart	Spatially distributed, moderate change rate	All	Aquatic life and human risk
Pesticides		Atrazine, 2,4-D, glyphosate, neonicotinoids, pyrethroids, carbamates, organophosphates	Based on flow chart	Near sources, <u>potential</u> rapid rate of change	Ag, U/S, F	Aquatic life risk
Tire-wear compounds		PPD-Qs	Water or sediment	Ephemeral subject to dilution in water; present in some sediments	Urban or rural roads	Aquatic life risk
Phthalates		TBD	Water		I, U/S	Aquatic life risk

*Pathways: Urban/stormwater (U/S), Agricultural (Ag), Mining (M), Industrial (I), Atmospheric (Atm), Forestry (F)

The proposed Adaptive Management approach follows a 5–7-year cycle that should include the following: results from CRBRP grants; collaborative monitoring efforts with TMS partners; partner input on adaptive management decisions and continual improvement; and flexibility to use trends to point to areas for further investigation.

Contact the TMS Core Team at gs-crbtoxmon@usgs.gov.

Wrap-up and Recognition of Local Partners

The Columbia River Basin Restoration Program would like to acknowledge its gratitude to the following partners:

- Tribal partners, especially for their valuable perspectives, knowledge, and leadership, which are so critical to the Working Group and have been since long before its inception.
- Jaime Pinkham, for providing an inspiring keynote address and centering us together at this Working Group.
- USGS and the EPA Toxics Monitoring Core Team for their work in developing the draft monitoring strategy and everyone who participated in the TMS for their work together on Wednesday.
- The Yakama Nation for its leadership on TMS and for developing a proposed collaborative implementation plan.
- The 21 partner organizations that gave their early engagement on the Strategy with the core team.
- The Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership and Salmon-Safe for their help in planning the Working Group meeting, hosting the excellent site tours, and for the Estuary Partnership's leadership in the Lower River.
- Southwest Washington partners, such as the City of Vancouver, Port of Vancouver, Fish & Wildlife, and Washington Ecology, who supported early planning and offered to help with site tour logistics.
- ODEQ for their leadership and for having the Working Group here in their backyard.
- The grantees of the EPA Columbia River Basin Restoration Program for their diligent, innovative, and collaborative work to reduce and/or monitor toxic pollution across the landscape.
- Mary Lou Soscia for her long-time program leadership, even before this work was recognized in statute ten years ago.

Many individuals also expressed their appreciation for other Working Group members and partners prior to the close of the meeting.