

THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY

EXPO '74: THE UNFINISHED WORK.

WE BELIEVE – That the human spirit itself must set its own limitations to achieve a beauty and order and the diversity that will fill the hearts of the children of the world with a new and happier vision of their destiny.

That from this city of Spokane there goes forth today to the world the message and challenge that the time of great environmental awakening is at hand. – ALL THIS WE BELIEVE.

This official credo of Expo '74 was delivered by well-known actor-comedian and philanthropist, Danny Kaye on May 4, 1974, before 85,000 people gathered at Spokane Falls. [William T. Youngs, *The Fair and the Falls: Spokane's Expo '74*, EWU Press, 1996]

Expo '74 marked a change in Spokane's relationship to the Spokane River. What was once an unsightly railroad yard became a beautiful recreational attraction, a symbol of the city's connection to nature. Some clean-up of the river had already been accomplished, and much more was planned, yet a great deal still remains to be done to make the river clean enough, and with flows high enough, to make the waters truly habitable for the fish that are there and for the re-introduction of salmon. If the waters are inviting for the wildlife, they are good for people, too.

The Upper Columbia River Group of the Sierra Club announces three educational outings to take place across the summer months that explain the river's pollution, describe past conservation work, and propose work for the future.

There will be three outings, beginning in May. All will be led by long-time environmental activists John Osborn MD and Carolyn Leon of the Upper Columbia River Group-Sierra Club. All of the outings are free. ■

For more information, to register, and to view events online, visit:

<https://www.sierraclub.org/washington/calendar>

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SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS.

MAY 18 9 A.M.-NOON. RESTORING SPOKANE FALLS.

This is a walking tour. We'll meet at the Riverfront Park Visitor's Center.

The work of Sierra Club and Avista to restore flows to Spokane Falls, followed by a walking tour of the waterfalls (Upper Spokane Falls and Lower Spokane Falls). The focus will be on human habitation from time immemorial followed by the coming of the railroads to the town of Spokane Falls, opening of the mines, explosion of population 1883 - 1910, the promise of Expo '74 in recovering Spokane Falls, and the citizen-led efforts to protect the waterfalls, river, and aquifer. In this work we honor the tribes and elders, including Upper Columbia United Tribes, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Kalispell Tribe, Colville Tribe, and Deb Abrahamson.

JUNE 22 9 A.M.- 4 P.M. PROTECTING COEUR D'ALENE LAKE.

We will meet to carpool at the parking lot for the Cedars Floating Restaurant, Blackwell Island, Coeur d'Alene. (Includes no-host lunch at the Snake Pit, at the confluence of the Coeur d'Alene River's North and South Forks.)



Self portrait showing Paul Delaney guiding a river raft on the Spokane River. You can read his Spokane River Story on page 4.

Protecting Coeur d'Alene Lake: one of the earth's most beautiful lakes and headwaters for the Spokane River, Coeur d'Alene Lake is also polluted. The lake is a tailings' pond for the Coeur d'Alene mining district -- with 60-80 million tons of toxic material on the lake bottom. To know the lake is to know its watershed: the great forest fire of 1910, massive logging, and mining's riches and wreckage. During the 1996 flood event, over a million pounds of lead flowed into Coeur d'Alene Lake and, some, into the Spokane River. In the decade after Expo '74, major battles erupted here over logging and mining pollution. We honor the Coeur d'Alene Tribe for leading the effort to protect their homeland and the lake. This event will focus on remedies for Coeur d'Alene Lake -- the unfinished work of Expo '74.

JULY 6 9 A.M.-1 P.M. RESTORING SALMON.

We will meet to carpool in the Grocery Outlet parking lot in Spokane, 1617 W 3rd

"The river is sacred. People will put aside their differences when it comes to the River and bringing back the Salmon," noted tribal statesman, Virgil Seymour (1958-2016).

"Water is life - it's sacred," noted Deb Abrahamson. Arising from the ashes of cultural genocide, Indigenous efforts working through the Upper Columbia United Tribes are leading the way to restoring salmon, including to the Spokane River. ■

CONSERVATION NOTES:

The 11th annual OREM conference will be held in person in Kelowna, B.C., Canada, and online on November 13 and 14. OREM will co-host the conference on river governance and ethics with the Universities Consortium on Columbia River Governance. Watch for further information on the UCRG Website.

Our Upper Columbia River Group initiated the Ethics and Treaty Project in 2012 and the “One River, Ethics Matter” (OREM) Conference Series in 2014. Both have been supported by Sierra Club’s Washington Chapter and the Columbia Institute for Water Policy.

The project’s goal is to promote principles of stewardship and justice in modernizing the Columbia River Treaty, which governs water and dam management on the Columbia River. The project works with Indigenous Sovereigns (U.S. Tribes and Canadian First Nations) with natural resource rights and management authorities and responsibilities affected by the Columbia River Treaty. (The Ethics & Treaty Project neither represents nor speaks for tribes and First Nations.)

Protecting mature and old-growth forests: A U.S. Federal Court has officially signed-off on a court decision last year that ruled the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) had violated several bedrock environmental and conservation laws when, in 2021, the agency dropped decades-old protections for nearly 7-million acres of mature and old-growth trees (known as the “Eastside Screens”) in six national forests in Oregon and Washington. The Eastside Screens protected trees 21 inches in diameter and larger from harvesting.

The Colville NF was not included in the ruling. However, the USFS has also vacated the “Large Tree Management Guideline” of the 2019 Colville NF Land Management Plan and will abide by the 1995 “Eastside Screens Forest Plan Amendment.” This protection of mature and old-growth trees in the Colville NF is very good news for our region.

Upper Columbia River Superfund Site?

“On March 5, 2024, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced a proposal to add the Upper Columbia River Site in northeast Washington to the National Priorities List, the list of hazardous waste sites in the United States eligible for cleanup under the federal Superfund Program. In a press release announcing the decision, the EPA said ‘the agency has determined that soils contaminated with lead and arsenic pose unacceptable risk to residents at affected properties, particularly to children.’”

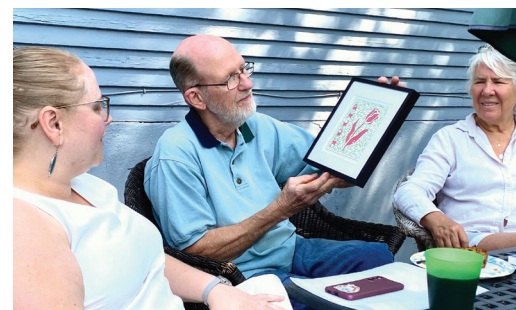
The counties involved are opposed. However, Washington State (Gov. Inslee), the Spokane Tribe, and The Confederated Tribes of the Colville are strongly in favor and have been hoping for this for years. We (UCRG) have supported the tribes on this matter in the past.

For further information:

<https://columbiainsight.org/epa-mulls-new-superfund-listing-on-columbia-river>

Our Sierra Club Washington Chapter has joined a broad-based coalition to “Defeat I-2117.” I-2117 is a state initiative that will appear on the November ballot in Washington State. It would prohibit state agencies from imposing any type of carbon tax credit trading, including “cap and trade” or “cap and tax” programs, regardless of whether the resulting increased costs are imposed on fuel recipients or fuel suppliers. It would repeal sections of the 2021 Washington Climate Commitment Act as amended, including repealing the creation and modification of a “cap and invest” program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by specific entities.

It would also cut off significant funding for the Trust Land Transfer program which allows state timber lands to be secured for community uses like fish and wildlife habitat, recreation, and education. Since 1989 the TLT program has preserved more than 125,000 acres of state trust land for these purposes. ■



Tom Soeldner receives a present at a recent Executive Committee meeting

Left: These photos show the Little Spokane River from Waikiki Springs Nature Preserve in north Spokane, and how large the Columbia River drainage is.

UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER GROUP

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Upper Columbia River Group

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

SEEKING NOMINEES: THE UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER GROUP SIERRA CLUB IS SEEKING NOMINEES FOR SERVICE ON OUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The successful candidates will have an interest or background in environmental activism and enjoy the give and take of working with other activists. Some of our members have special expertise, but many are simply interested folks who love the outdoors and are willing to work on sub-committees and attend our monthly meetings. Usually, work on our Executive Committee runs to about five hours a month. Currently, our members work on behalf of the health of the Colville Forest and the Spokane River as well as the Columbia River watershed; other concerns include toxic sludge, climate change, and more. We are currently ramping up the educational hikes that we call Outings. We table at various local events, most recently at the Arbor Day gathering at Finch Arboretum.

The Sierra Club was established in 1892, the oldest and largest environmental organization in the United States and Puerto Rico. The Sierra Club is a volunteer-driven non-profit.

If this volunteer opportunity sounds attractive to you, or if you know someone you'd like to nominate, please contact **Kathy Dixon** at spokaneriverstories@gmail.com

The Upper Columbia River Group Sierra Club also seeks people who would like to co-lead one or more Outings. Do you have knowledge of outdoor areas in this region? Maybe you know how to identify plants or wildlife or birds. Perhaps you are an amateur geologist or wildlife photographer. If you think that you'd like to help us expand our Outings schedule, drop us a line! Contact Carolyn Leon at lonestar4@aol.com. ■



MEET OUR NEW VOLUNTEER, TAYLOR LICON.

I was born in Nevada, Carson City, mainly raised in Arizona. I'm studying pre-law at Gonzaga. I'm interested in helping with the Upper Columbia River Group-Sierra Club political committee. I was drawn to the Sierra Club because nature is one of the most important things we interact with daily in our lives. Especially having lived in very different climates and places, I understand that the value in protecting nature is tremendous. ■

THORP PROPERTY HIKE.

by Paige Kenney.

Hal Rowe from Spokane Urban Nature, recently presented to the UCRG ExCom. He told us there is an excellent opportunity to mitigate overdevelopment and improve the quality of life for current developments in the area. A 190 acre strip on the West Thorpe Rd is available to be transferred to the Spokane Parks and Lands department at no cost. The UCRG ExCom voted to support this advocacy by sending out an email to encourage members to submit public comment. The public comment deadline is April 30, 2024 and probably already past by the time you get this newsletter. But we thought you'd like to know about this possibility.

Hal invited ExCom members to take a little hike through this site later in the week. Kathy Dixon and I took him up on it. After a quick drive down Highway 195 to Thorpe Road, we drove through a pair of two lane tunnels, railroad overpasses. The tunnels have a historic charm but are inadequate to support the traffic created by any greater development. The expensive reconfiguring of tracks and underpasses to allow for more traffic is only one argument against greater development along Thorpe. A large natural area is also essential to mitigate all the various problems of low density sprawl.

We drove to the second turn-out on the left of Thorpe Road and parked in a small, unpaved lot. Bounding out of the car like the senior citizens we are, we joined Hal for our short hike.

There were some houses and many terraces for future lots across the street. I thought about my own neighborhood where there is access to parks and woodland spaces. Open spaces keep us much cooler than hardscaped commercial spaces. Natural areas benefit even non-hikers.

A "Private No Trespassing" sign and a barbed wire fence were close to the trail. Even so, we only had to walk a short way into the DNR property to feel that we were immersed in the forest. We talked about how old the trees were. Hal thought maybe this was the third growth after a couple of loggings. Mountain chickadees observed us and the juncos twittered deeper in the forest. "Hear the frogs." Hal said. We wandered toward a small pond and the tree frog music stopped. Frog music is my favorite. Poor me, I'll have to go back there again. I'll be stealthier so I can listen to a longer concert.

We passed the site of the Thorpe Rd fire, a smaller fire than most of those we had last summer. There were dead trees, but still a lot of green ones with minimal damage. At one point we noticed a much greener patch extending across the trail. I wondered where the water came from.

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Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Planet.

THE BACK PAGE. SPOKANE RIVER STORIES.

THORP PROPERTY HIKE.

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I later asked Jeff Lambert, another Spokane Urban Nature member. This property sits on a vast basalt slab. Water pools, like the little tree frog pond, form in the declivities of this basalt. There are some cracks in the basalt where the water seeps through towards the valley below. So if you walk toward Highway 195 there are springs and seepages along the hillside. I assume this feeds Latah Creek. It seems logical to me that this water mitigated the damage of the fire. If this is true, it is a significant resiliency factor.



The water does create good habitat. Jeff says he's seen all the favorites—deer, moose, marmots, rabbits, weasels, coyotes—as well as two different species of owl, a Great Horned Owl and a Flammulated Owl. (Wow, next time I'll bring my binoculars.) Besides the aforementioned wildflowers, there are other important indigenous plants, such as camas and biscuit root which have always been so significant to tribal life. There is so much to learn here in this forest.

We hiked on through several small meadows until we reached a bigger one. This spot was

the quintessential Eastern Washington forest meadow. I felt like a herd of deer might step out from between the trees. This is the appeal of nature: that sense of possibility, that sense of mystery. "It's not much of an elevation, but I feel I am on the top of the world." Kathy said.

NO RACIST SIGNS!

Recently, KXLY news reported racist stickers on the traffic lights at Second and Jefferson in downtown Spokane. This location is on the route to west side trails for bicyclists and hikers, like the Fish Lake Trail, Palisades Park, and the northern portion of Centennial Trail. We at the Upper Columbia River Group-Sierra Club take such actions very seriously. There can be no racism discouraging people from enjoying our city streets, parks, and places of outdoor recreation.

This latest act reminds us of another that occurred last fall. Those of us who are NAACP members received word that someone sprayed the "N word" on the Centennial Trail that runs through Spokane and the Spokane Valley. This prompted our Executive Committee to formally condemn such acts of vandalism.

The Sierra Club stands for environmental justice. We believe that nature's goodness belongs equally to all people. None of our public parks or trails should ever communicate anything but a positive welcome to everyone.

We are appalled at this vandalism of our beautiful trail and we hope that others in the community will join us in denouncing this divisive act.

As always, we welcome your stories, photos, poems, and artwork related to the Spokane River, and more broadly, local nature.

THE BIRTH OF SPOKANE RAFTER GUY.

By Paul Delaney

My "love affair" with the Spokane River dates back to the 1960s living in northwest Spokane near Joe Albi Stadium.

As middle-school aged kids we would ride our bikes or hike down to Bowl and Pitcher Riverside State Park to explore. My mother would warn "Don't go near that river, people drown down there!"

What did I do in college in 1982 but take a rafting class at EWU and learn how to run the Bowl & Pitcher?

Having had more experience than others in my class I was designated paddle captain. Despite my commands to paddle in a specific direction my boat missed its mark and we went into the big wave under the swinging bridge.

We dropped down into the trough of the 15-foot standing wave. One by one as the raft went nearly vertical, my paddle crew flew over my head and into the cold May water.

I stayed in the boat with a single paddle and the raft was pushed out and over the wave and rescued by others in the class.

That was likely the first of what over 40 years later now tallies an estimated 600 to 700 runs down the Spokane. Those have been at levels from a trickle to a flood of nearly 40,000 cubic-feet-per-second, in summer heat to a New Year's Day at not far above zero.