

THE SIERRA CLUB ENDORSES

MOLLY MARSHALL FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER.

The Executive Committee of the Upper Columbia River Group has voted, 4-0, to endorse the candidacy of Molly Marshall for County Commissioner District 5. ExCom YES votes: Tom Soeldner, Fred Christ, Kathy Dixon, Paige Kenney; Carolyn Leon was supportive, but as chair could not vote. Erin Dascher was absent.

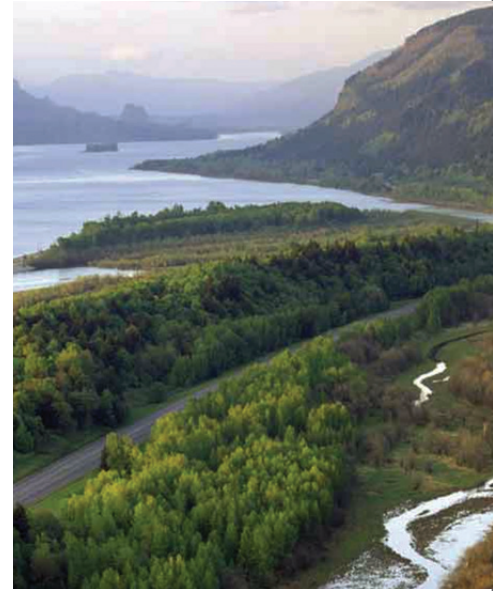
Molly Marshall is attempting to unseat the incumbent County Commissioner Al French in the District 5. This is only the second time that this particular seat has been available. For years, three commissioners were selected by voters in county-wide elections. Since 2022, five districts have been formed. Two were created for largely Democratic majorities, two for Republican majorities, and one more evenly divided between the two political parties. This swing district is the one that Marshall and French are contending for.

Molly Marshall is a retired lieutenant colonel in the Air National Guard and is also an environmental activist in Latah Valley, where she has lived for 30 years. It is an area often eyed by real estate developers for the attractions of its wild beauty. The development is often undertaken without adequate attention to preserving some of that wild beauty as well as to important infrastructure needs, such as creating roads that could assist in residential evacuation should a wildfire occur or boosting the number of fire stations serving the area. Molly Marshall co-founded Citizens Action for Latah Valley to tackle just these problems in her neighborhood.

Marshall has also taken the lead in the local PFAS controversy. Wells in the West Plains area have been contaminated by PFAS caused by firefighting foam used at Geiger Field and at the Spokane International Airport. PFAS has been known to exist in the area since at least 2017. Marshall charges her opponent with keeping this knowledge quiet, only speaking out when more recent discoveries came to light.

Marshall has a Five-Point Plan to tackle the problem. This includes seeking federal funds (from the EPA and unused Federal Rescue Plan money) for a PFAS Victims' Fund. She would also urge the county to join an already-existing PFAS class action suit, appoint a toxicologist, and establish a task force to propose further actions on the issue, comprised of "dedicated experts and community members." She would also consult the Spokane County Regional Health District and its experts.

Her opponent is floating a project to pump wastewater into the Spokane River and then pump more out to reach Airway Heights residents. "Imagine, if you will, a big pipe from our wastewater treatment facility in the valley piping water down to, let's say, the community college and then pumping the water back up to the West Plains," French said to an interviewer on Spokane Public Radio on July 31, 2024.



The Columbia River, WA.

"I don't have a pipe that big but I do have the river, so can I put eight million gallons in here and then take it out downstream and Ecology said, 'Well, yeah, we could do that if you could create a trust agreement that said you're not going to take more water out of the river than you put into it,'" French said. However, there are many "trustees" of the river, including the City of Spokane and the Spokane Tribe of Indians. There are no such agreements in place. The Spokane River does not actually flow through this area, so "the pipe" would need to be very big indeed.

Molly Marshall can win. She has \$130,000 and 200 volunteers and is strategic in the use of her resources, focusing on 12 swing precincts. Marshall's Air National Guard background may help her appeal to independents and liberal Republicans. "I know how to lead," as she told the UCRG in her interview, and "I know how to listen."

Molly is opposed to all irresponsible development. When asked about urban density she told us she believed that development should be allowed only in already established corridors. She opposes the expansion of fossil fuels and sees the potential in alternative energy as an economic engine, as well as to mitigate climate change ■

CONSERVATION NOTES:

COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY "AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE"

ON JULY 11 THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA ANNOUNCED THAT THEY HAD REACHED AN "AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE" (AIP) IN THEIR NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY REGIME. ELEMENTS OF AN AIP DO NOT HAVE THE FORCE OF LAW. IT MEANS THE U.S. AND CANADA AGREE, IN PRINCIPLE, ON CORE ISSUES AND HAVE A JOINT COMMITMENT TO DRAFT TEXT OF A TREATY AMENDMENT AND RELATED ARRANGEMENTS.

Under the AIP, the countries have agreed that a modernized treaty will provide some level of assured pre-planned flood control and continued co-operation on hydropower for the Columbia River. Thus, the AIP averts sharp, immediate changes in Columbia River flood management for which Northwest people, communities and the river are not prepared. However, it leaves unresolved critical Treaty issues dealing with the health of the river and salmon restoration to be determined in continuing negotiations over the coming months.

"The health of the Columbia River must become an explicit purpose in a new, modernized Treaty," said Joseph Bogaard of the Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition, who chairs the Columbia River Treaty NGO Caucus. "Northwest people need a partner within the federal government committed to protecting the river and its salmon, steelhead and native fish as its waters continue to warm."

"U.S. Treaty governance must expand to include Indigenous expertise and a committed federal steward of the Columbia's health, and changes to flood risk management under a renewed Treaty must also deliver healthier river conditions for both people and salmon. We look forward to ensuring these changes are made."

Many Columbia River tribes have called for Ecosystem Function, i.e. the health of the river and native fish, to be added as a new, third Treaty purpose, joining power production and flood management. Increasingly, hot reservoir waters kill imperiled fish and support toxic algae blooms — with worse to come as our planet continues to warm.

Sierra Club and its Ethics and Treaty Project are members of the Columbia River Treaty Non-Governmental Organization Caucus created in 2012. Other members include the Center for Environmental Law and Policy, Earth Ministry and Washington Interfaith Power and Light, League of Women Voters of Washington, National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Northwest Energy Coalition, Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition, and WaterWatch of Oregon ■

COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN SYMPOSIUM – SPOKANE, NOV 13-15

The Ethics and Treaty Project (One River, Ethics Matter Conferences sponsor) is working with the Universities Consortium on Columbia River Governance and the North American Youth Parliament on Water (NAYPW) in planning an international conference focused on Columbia River Basin governance.

The conference will focus on issues raised by the Columbia River Treaty, salmon introduction by Indigenous sovereigns, and Columbia River Basin governance.

Watch for further information closer to the time of the conference on our Upper Columbia River Group website: <https://www.sierraclub.org/washington/upper-columbia-river>

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Upper Columbia
River Group





VOTE AGAINST I-2117.

By Sophie Cieslicki

THE WASHINGTON STATE CHAPTER OF THE SIERRA CLUB AND THE UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER GROUP URGES ITS MEMBERS TO VOTE AGAINST INITIATIVE 2117, WHICH WOULD ELIMINATE THE CLIMATE COMMITMENT ACT OF 2021.

In 2021, the Climate Commitment Act (CCA) was passed, impacting carbon tax credit trading in Washington with a goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, “and [it] has raised over \$2 billion from the state’s largest greenhouse gas emitters” (Zhou and Withycombe). Money raised by CCA is required to be utilized to cut pollution, create jobs in the environmental sector, and support communities impacted by climate change. Initiative 2117 would eliminate the Climate Commitment Act. In 2023, about 420,000 Washingtonians signed petitions to support Initiative 2117, and if this initiative passes, Washington emission limits will fade. Washington business will no longer be held accountable for the pollution they create, and we will also lose revenue utilized to combat climate change across the state (Cornfield).

RESOURCES:

Cornfield, Jerry. “WA Decides: Initiative 2117 to Repeal the Climate Commitment Act.” Washington State Standard, 20 May 2024.

Zhou, Amanda, and Claire Withycombe. “State Carbon Market, Energy Regulations Face Tough Road before November Election, WA Poll Shows.” The Seattle Times, 23 July 2024 ■



EXPO '74. THE UNFINISHED WORK: **PROTECTING THE COEUR D'ALENE RIVER, THE JUNE 22 OUTING**

A DOZEN OF US SIERRA CLUB MEMBERS AND FRIENDS MET AT THE CEDARS FLOATING RESTAURANT, BLACKWELL ISLAND, COEUR D'ALENE TO DISCUSS THE HEAVY METAL POLLUTION IN THE LAKE COEUR D'ALENE, WHICH IS ALSO THE SOURCE FOR THE SPOKANE RIVER.

We reflected on what we already knew about the lake. “On the surface, Lake Coeur d’Alene looks like the perfect postcard, its cool waters shimmering beneath a rolling green carpet of trees. But beneath the water lies a graphic portrait of environmental devastation, according to a four-year study. Government scientists found an estimated 75 million tons of toxic mining waste coating the lake bottom. The result is a 25-mile-long dead zone where no organisms can survive.” (*Toxic Floods of the Coeur d’Alene*, www.waterplanet.ws/pdf/npsr20050601.pdf)

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.

Flooding from nearby clearcut forests forced waters polluted with lead and other heavy metals straight into the lake. Without their trees, the mountains slopes can’t hold the water. So polluted is Lake Coeur d’Alene, that the Environmental Protection Agency declared the region a Superfund Site in 1983. Unfortunately, no one with any power in Idaho government or along the lake wants a clean-up of the lake itself, for fear of driving away summer recreation and lowering property values in what is now a pricey real estate area.

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Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Planet.

THE BACK PAGE. SPOKANE RIVER STORIES.



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EXPO '74 UNFINISHED WORK: PROTECTING THE COEUR D'ALENE RIVER

The June outing also took us to the trail head to the Polaski tunnel near Wallace, Idaho. Our own John Osborn told us of his time as an Idaho forest firefighter in the 1970s. He showed us his "Polaski," an implement created by the heroic Ed Polaski before the famous 1910 fire where he saved most of his men by sheltering in a tunnel while flames engulfed the entrance. The Polaski is now used by all firefighters. It consists of an ax and an adze, the latter for digging to create

firebreaks. John told us that in his time as a firefighter, all forest blazes were quenched, but that now some are allowed to burn, creating a more natural condition for forests. In time, this policy should lead to fewer large conflagrations. ■



MEET OUR NEW VOLUNTEER, SOPHIE CIESLICKI.

Sophie Cieslicki is a new volunteer to The Sierra Club and is new to Spokane, WA. Sophie grew up in the northern Midwest and lived in the Great Lakes region for 26 years, and she found her passion for the environment and sustainability through exploring state and national parks and by being an animal lover. Other than working at Gonzaga University in Housing and Residence Life, Sophie can be found walking dogs at the Spokane Humane Society, exploring natural areas via hiking and kayaking, and visiting local parks with her two beagles. ■