

A SMALL COMMITTEE OF LINCOLN COUNTY NEIGHBORS GOES UP AGAINST THE WASTE-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX OF SEWAGE SLUDGE SLINGERS

Residents and organic farmers who live in an area near Davenport, Washington called Mill Canyon feel threatened by proposals to spread municipal sewage sludge on nearly 900 acres of agricultural land uphill from where they live, garden and farm. The area in question includes their natural watershed.

They are alarmed because the Washington State Department of Ecology will likely approve a permit within days that will allow the dumping, despite objections they have formally filed with the agency during its official comment period.

Mill Canyon residents are organizing to prevent the permit application to dump the sludge from being approved.

In 2006, a review of scientific literature on sewage sludge contaminants was conducted by a team of Cornell University researchers. They reviewed data on 516 organic compounds detected in bio-solids. Only nine are regulated. "The results of this work reinforce the need for a survey of organic chemical contaminants in sewage sludges and for further assessment of the risks they pose," the researchers concluded. Meanwhile, more "chemicals of concern" are steadily being added to the long list of unregulated contaminants.

Morton Alexander is a Mill Canyon resident landowner who is very concerned about pollution from sludge, especially because his spring is used by many families in the canyon as a free source of clean drinking water. "Old legislation deemed



LINCOLN COUNTY, WA: Mill Creek runs through Mill Canyon into the Spokane River. Over the objection of local population, a permit to allow the dumping of municipal sewage sludge on agricultural land is expected to be approved.

'bio-solids' a 'beneficial resource' and mandated Ecology to promote its use," Alexander said, "making the department a booster of this dubious practice rather than a credible regulator in the public interest."

Mill Canyon residents who consider the risks unacceptable have formed a committee called Protect Mill Canyon Watershed. They have urged the Washington State Department of Ecology to deny the permit. They publish an informative website and participate using news outlets and social media to educate the public about their struggle to keep their environment clean.

"Our fight against this permit resists 'environmental class-ism,' the victimization of a community of low income people. It's representative of how the sludge industry and its partner Ecology operate across Washington. We call for a statewide moratorium on all such permits until light is shed on this dark industry," Alexander said. From the Protect Mill Canyon Watershed website, members of the public may send email messages to the government supporting the

residents' plea to deny the permit and call for a statewide moratorium.

The Department of Ecology, already very late in finalizing the fate of this permit application, has now said it is within days that they will make a final ruling. If Ecology approves the permit, Protect Mill Canyon Watershed will need to raise funds to appeal the decision. The Committee along with its fiscal sponsor, the Columbia Institute for Water Policy, are now accepting donations to their legal fund on the website protectmillcanyon.org.



To sign the on-line petition asking for the moratorium, go here: <http://tinyurl.com/no-sludge-on-ag>

TO SAVE A RIVER FROM DECREPIT DAMS

River advocates are calling on the U.S. government to follow its own rules after a dam proponent missed a key deadline. At stake is the international Similkameen River – a river that flows out of British Columbia and into the United States, where it joins the Okanogan River at Oroville, Washington.

SIMILKAMEEN RIVER, OPUD, FERC

Enloe dam was built between 1916 and 1923 just above Similkameen Falls. Okanogan Public Utility District (OPUD) purchased Enloe dam in 1953. The dam has not generated power since 1958, and it is a “plug” near the mouth of the Similkameen River, blocking access to 200 miles of river habitat upstream.

The agency responsible for licensing Enloe dam is the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The purpose of the five-member Commission is to protect the public and energy customers, ensuring that regulated energy companies are acting within the law.

OPUD is seeking to “electrify” the 100-year-old Enloe Dam. To generate power, OPUD would dewater Similkameen Falls, diverting 90-99% of the natural flows around the waterfalls.

After two failed attempts to re-electrify the dam in the 1990’s, FERC approved a new license on July 9, 2013. Under the license, OPUD is required to meet conditions, including a date for starting the project.

To prevent the destruction of the waterfalls, the Center for Environmental Law & Policy (CELP) challenged the state’s water quality certification and won a decision that OPUD’s proposal to dewater Similkameen Falls lacked scientific foundation.

As required by the FERC license, OPUD was supposed to have started the project this summer, but OPUD missed its deadline. Under federal rules, OPUD must now forfeit the license, opening the door to restoring the river. However,

OPUD now wants FERC to waive the deadline. River advocates want FERC to uphold the agency’s own rules and terminate the license.

In September during the first round of legal action brought by the Hydropower Reform Coalition, FERC sided with OPUD against Similkameen River advocates, agreeing to suspend its own rules.

RUIN A RIVER? RATEPAYERS SEE RED

The project would divert river flow into new turbines, de-watering popular Similkameen Falls for most of the year. River advocates propose instead: remove the dam, restore more than 200 miles of free-flowing river.

For local ratepayers, electrifying Enloe dam means red ink.

In 2014 river advocates released an economics report prepared by Rocky Mountain Econometrics (RME) of Boise, Idaho: re-powering Enloe dam will lose between \$1.1 and \$1.5 million annually – losses to be paid by local ratepayers. Economics worsen when water is released to keep from drying-up Similkameen Falls, as required by law.

Enloe dam underscores the fact that hydropower is not “green energy,” too often causing tremendous harm to streams and rivers – and the life, cultures, and economies that depend on rivers. Decrepit Dams like Enloe need to come out.

Sierra Club is a member of the Hydropower Reform Coalition (HRC). Since the mid-1990s our Upper Columbia River Group has worked through HRC to remove Enloe dam and restore the Similkameen River. Your help will be needed: constant vigilance will save this river.

For more information or to help, contact: John Osborn, john@waterplanet.ws

UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER GROUP

Executive Committee

Fred Christ
fredchrist@msn.com

Kathy Dixon
sotiriabellou2014@gmail.com

Evita Krislock
evita@krislock.com

Carolyn Leon
lonestar4@aol.com

John Osborn
john@waterplanet.ws
509.939.1290

Tom Soeldner
waltsoe@gmail.com

Evita Krislock
Beyond Fossil Fuels
Rachael Paschal Osborn
Spokane River Project

Katie Evans
Newsletter Editor

Washington State Chapter

LIKE, FOLLOW, AND CONTRIBUTE

 Upper Columbia River Group



PHOTOS
ABOVE & LEFT:
Chrys Ostrander
RIGHT:
Laura Ackerman

SIERRA CLUB MEMBERSHIP: BEING PART OF SOMETHING REMARKABLE

The Sierra Club is the oldest, largest, and arguably the most influential environmental organization in the United States. Its excellence lies in the day-to-day committed activity of its members. We hope that you understand your membership not only as receiving an excellent magazine. It is also a commitment and responsibility as an important part of the Upper Columbia River Group and its activity to “explore, enjoy, and protect” that part of the planet that is Spokane and Northeastern Washington. To be more involved contact us via the email addresses of our Executive Committee members on the facing page. And note the following homage for your Sierra Club by Rebecca Solnit, “THE STORY OF THE SIERRA CLUB, taken in all at once, is astounding. The organization has expanded its membership, its perspective, and its reach so extensively that you could speak of several Sierra Clubs over the past 125 years. The current one would be unrecognizable not just to cofounder John Muir, but also to the subsequent white men who led it in the postwar era and battled over its future.

“The Sierra Club has evolved with the country, just as it has evolved with the expanded understanding of natural systems and what it takes to ensure their integrity. The Club has led some of that understanding and its transformation into policy, and in that way has been unique in its impact. These colossal changes were not foreseeable; there were no great prophets, only people who responded well to surprises. What the past tells us about the future is that there will be more: surprises, evolutions, transformations.

“When you take stock of what the Sierra Club has achieved over the last century and a quarter, remember that many of its greatest

accomplishments look like nothing. They are not monuments to human achievement but the prevention of monuments to human folly. The monuments are calamities avoided: unbuilt ski resorts and coal-fired power plants; children who didn’t get asthma and fish that didn’t ingest mercury when that coal wasn’t burned; nonexistent trash incinerators; forests that weren’t logged and species that didn’t go extinct; rivers that weren’t dammed. The monuments are places where all the original species can continue their elaborate dances together as they did when we humans were a modest species with minor impact.

“Perhaps the Sierra Club’s greatest monument is how most of us, even far beyond the organization’s 2.7 million members and supporters, imagine the world around us and what we value in it. During the last century, our consciousness in relationship to the natural world has changed more than most people comprehend, and the Sierra Club has played an essential role in those changes. . . .

“This transformed consciousness, this love of the natural world, cannot easily be done away with. It is nothing less than a revolution in thought that has taken place over the last couple of centuries, intensifying over the past 60 years. It is the foundation on which we can continue to build. Or, to rewrite that thought with more wildness: This love of the natural world is the meadow in which we can continue to grow beautiful ideas and powerful movements. It is—make no mistake—a majority position.”

Sierra Magazine, May/June 2017, pp. 37-38, “[Declarations of Independence](#),” By Rebecca Solnit.

continued from back cover

out of the way, we will need the strength that comes via the joy and challenge of living responsibly, i.e. getting out of the way as individuals and families. Taking responsibility for others doesn’t work and always leaves us with the stress. Taking responsibility for the earth, rather than our little portion of it, will cripple us. While wider challenges dwarf responsible individual efforts the latter are the cords that keep us both grounded and nourished for bigger tasks.

You may not “save the planet” by eating a plant-based diet, or by driving less, or by giving up air travel, but who said your job was to save the planet? Maybe your job is to do those individually responsible things that will confirm your sense of being a part of, rather than apart from, this good earth: plant a tree, let your grass grow long, walk more and feel the ground beneath your feet.

Maybe your job is to be in tune with the natural systems that gave you life in the first place—getting out of their way? Maybe your job is to enjoy and celebrate the natural world by finding your place in it and discovering yourself welcomed there. Then you might find yourself once more ready to more collaboratively explore, enjoy, and protect the planet.



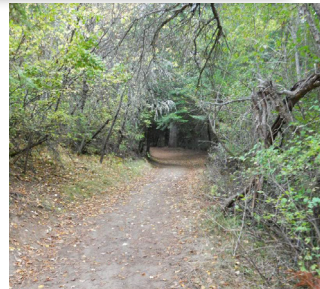
UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER GROUP

P.O. Box 413
Spokane, WA 99210

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[MEETUP.COM/EXPLORING-THE-INLAND-NORTHWEST-WITH-SIERRA-CLUB/](https://www.meetup.com/exploring-the-inland-northwest-with-sierra-club/)



On Thursday, October 19th from 3-8pm at the Liberty Lake City Hall the first draft of the master plan for the Liberty Lake park will be presented. The presentation begins at 3pm, but if you work, come later to see the plan and give input. At an earlier event people were asked for their input on what should be the long range plan for the park. Anyone who has enjoyed hiking in this area should be concerned about the potential scenarios under consideration. One of these proposed scenarios is what they call the “tourist” option that would turn the park into a major tourist destination meaning more people and development which will most certainly impact the natural area that we enjoy now. The better plan would be the “ecosystem” option that invests in “improvements only as necessary to enhance the observation and conservation experience.” All of the plans are available for review and comment online at <https://www.llrp-masterplan.com/library>. If commenting, be sure you do so under the plan you are interested in. We encourage everyone who currently enjoys hiking in the park to support the ecosystem plan.

Remember to sign up for our Meetup group “Exploring the Inland Northwest with the Sierra Club” to follow our schedule. Happy hiking!

GETTING OUT OF THE WAY

E.O. Wilson has noted that as products of our own evolutionary history we have evolved to be short-sighted, concerned almost entirely about our kind. We have stone age emotions, i.e. instincts, and we think about survival in the narrowest of terms. Even when we think of the environment it is in terms of its effect on us.

“Stone age instincts,” and yet our institutions are products of the Middle Ages and their politics of power and intrigue, and our technology provides us with what we have heretofore considered godlike possibilities. It is a dangerous mix that is not serving us or our world well. How are we to live in what we now call the Anthropocene, an era when our lone species is the dominant power determining the earth’s next geologic era?

It’s easy these days for those who love nature to be discouraged. Dramatic climate change is a reality no longer to be denied or escaped, even if we hope to mitigate its effects. How do we keep discouragement from paralyzing our exploring, enjoying, and protecting the planet as the Sierra Club has done for 125 years?

Certainly we do not stop working together for systemic changes. But while short-term collaborative victories are possible, we know that the wider, long-term prospects are dismal. Mitigation is neither restoration nor health. There is no way that even the best and smartest of us can undo the damage we have done as a species. Today we must get out of the way and let nature do that work.

If we are to continue our systemic efforts, i.e. our collaborating in getting

continued on page 3