

## SPOKANE RIVER 2022

# SPOKANE RIVER WIN

The Spokane River and the hundreds of thousands who live near and along this treasured waterway have won a major victory with a federal judge's approval of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) agreement to issue a mandated cleanup plan for cancer-causing PCBs polluting the river. The Judge's ruling culminates a 10-year legal battle waged by Sierra Club and the Center for Environmental Law & Policy. The Spokane Tribe of Indians intervened in support of the federal lawsuit to enforce the federal law requiring an EPA clean-up plan after decades of inaction by the State of Washington. Take a look at the story in Sierra Club's [Water Sentinels blog](#).

**PCBs are dangerous to life including human life because they cause cancer and other diseases. Tiny amounts in water concentrate as they move up the food chain. For many years, Washington's Department of Health has issued a health advisory on human consumption of PCB-contaminated fish in the Spokane River.**

PCB manufacture is banned in the U.S. All PCBs entering the river are from old sources except for one: Inland Empire Paper Co., which imports newsprint containing PCBs. The other four government identified PCB dischargers are Kaiser Aluminum, and the Liberty Lake, Spokane County, and City of Spokane wastewater treatment plants. All five entities have discharge pipes that are permitted by the Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE). Currently the State's pollution permits contain no limits on PCBs flowing into the Spokane River. The TMDL (Total Minimum Daily Load) will change how PCBs are regulated in the Spokane River watershed.

The good news of this settlement, however, is not the end of our challenges for a healthy Spokane River. Washington State's Department of Ecology (WaDoE) has proposed "variances" for polluters whereby they could take extended periods of time with no end in sight to meet their obligations under the Clean Water Act, which we contend defeats the purpose and intention of the Act. Your local Upper Columbia River Group will keep you advised of developments as cleanup efforts proceed. Watch future newsletters and sign up for notifications via our [Facebook Page](#). ■

## WATER CONSERVATION COMES TO SPOKANE

It's another win for humans and nature!

A trio of Upper Columbia River Group friends — ExCom Secretary Kathy Dixon, former "Raging Granny"\* Deena Romoff, and Sierra Club tabler Olivia Longie—squeezed into Dixon's Prius (aka "The Dog Car") in order to attend the Spokane City Council meeting on Monday, May 23rd.

The occasion was the final debate before the council vote on Ordinance C36209: "Establishing water conservation and drought response measures." The ordinance would gently restrict lawn-watering to every other day and between the hours of 6 p.m and 10 a.m. During times of drought, lawn-watering would be reduced to twice a week.

*continued on page 6*

### Contact Sierra Club's Spokane River Team for further questions:

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### COME SEE US AT THE PRIDE FESTIVAL!

Be sure to stop by our table at the Pride Festival on Saturday, June 11.

We will be there from noon until 6 pm

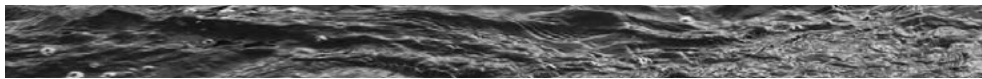
### VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES!

We have two volunteer opportunities for people who are interested in helping us with the following:

- help lead outings
- help us identify and interview those who fish in the Spokane River.

We are eager to know if you know anyone who fishes in the Spokane River, especially if they eat their catch. If you would like further involvement in this project, you can become an interviewer. We will train interviewers to act as ethnographers to perform some fieldwork. The team will be led by two Professors, Dr. Erin Dascher (EWU) and Dr. Kathleen Dixon (emerita, UND).

In either case, please contact [spokaneriverstories@gmail.com](mailto:spokaneriverstories@gmail.com)



## MORE RIVER STORIES:

Again, we issue a call for more Spokane River Stories. If you have a short-short story, anecdote or poem, or something more visual, like a photograph or original artwork that centers on the Spokane River, we'd love you to submit it. We will publish them either on our website (currently under construction) or in our newsletter, Nature's Advocate. We now expect to supplement our fall snail-mailed newsletter with several digital ones throughout the year.

Here are the Spokane River Stories that our members sent us after the last call. Enjoy!

### New Members Take Their Portraits With Salmon

We tabled on Earth Day at the Riverfront Park Pavilion, Friday, April 22 from 2 to 4 p.m., before and during the Climate March. Some attendees wore "gathering of the species costumes," and thus our table was visited by turtles, butterflies and busy bees. A second tabling occurred on Saturday, April 23 at the Hope for Creation Conference at St. John's Cathedral.

Tablers included Tom Soeldner, Morton Alexander, Monica Lowney, Kathy Dixon, Paige Kenney, and Olivia Longie.

Our next tabling event is at Spokane PRIDE on Saturday, June 11. Please contact Kathy Dixon at [spokaneriverstories@gmail.com](mailto:spokaneriverstories@gmail.com) if you'd like to help us. A good time is generally had by all. ■

Below are two new UCR-Sierra Club members who stopped by our table to take their Portraits with Salmon. We would also like to welcome new member Andrea Chatburn (not pictured).



Renata Rollins, Student@ Spokane Community College Water Science Program



Rayna Meade

## UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER GROUP

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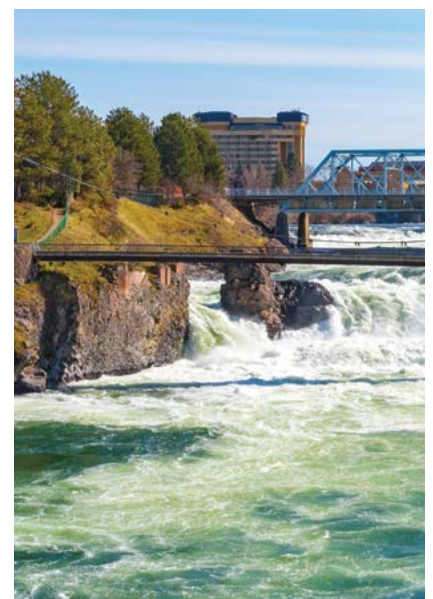
Fran Dixon Zabawa

*Newsletter Editors*

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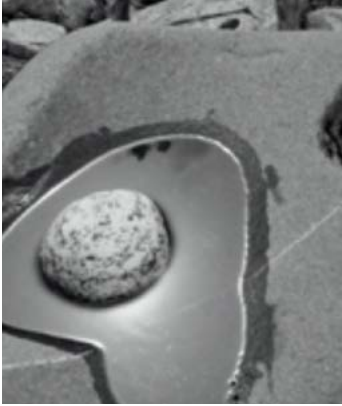


Upper Columbia River Group





# SPOKANE RIVER STORIES & POEMS



## THE LIGHT UPON THE WATER

Stand by a river  
when immersed in murky thoughts.  
Take off your shoes  
and put both feet in the water.  
Do it.  
Though it may seem counter-intuitive  
when all efforts have become entangled  
in that darkness  
beneath the surface.

Feel the sand, or the pebbles  
or hell, even the mud between your toes.  
Sense the current, or stillness  
or rhythm of waves.  
Hear the geese passing over  
and wonder.  
Take a bead on the sun  
or the moon, or a cloud.

You may find yourself  
suddenly spellbound,  
the illumination, a metallic sheen  
or starburst of diamond sparkle,  
the light upon the water  
that charges our electrical circuitry,  
the transformative spark.

And if you can't stand by a river  
or lake  
or any other honest body of water,  
find something else.

– Molly Beck  
molly@mollybeck.com



## WHERE HAVE ALL THE MARMOTS GONE...

Where have all the marmots gone, long  
time passing?

Darkened, vacated rocky holed-homes –  
once bouncing with life –

### NOW – no signs of critter inhabitation.

I once walked along the Spokane River  
Centennial Trail by Gonzaga camps, often  
accompanied by four-legged smiley and  
chattering critters –

### NOW – silent.

An earth caring man – wheelchair bound,  
once strewed peanut snacks –

### NOW – none there to crack them open.

### What has happened?

Has industrial construction disrupted this  
natural gift?

Have the natural habitats for these fun  
loving creatures been violated through  
human consumption and greed?

My heart cries out as I walk this vacated –  
homeland of the Centennial Trail, aching  
and searching for any signs of marmot life  
again.

Yes, where have all the marmots gone,  
long time passing?

– Kathy Roberg, Jan. 29, 2022

## Releasing Jake

On Veteran's Day 2021, my husband  
and I released our portion of my  
brother Jake's ashes into the Spokane  
River. He died in Moab, Utah in April  
2020, at the beginning of the Covid-19  
pandemic.



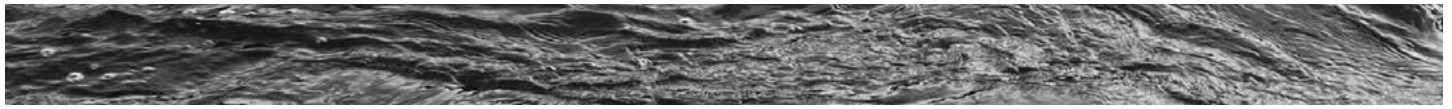
Jake Burnett 1945-2020

A gathering in  
Moab at that time  
was impossible.  
The executor of  
his will divided  
the ashes into  
three, with a  
share going  
to a brother  
who scattered  
them into the  
Pacific Ocean off the coast of Northern  
California, a portion to me, and the  
remainder released into the Colorado  
River near Moab.

On that cool November day, we chose  
a quiet spot near the Sandifur Bridge  
at the foot of a staircase leading to the  
river's edge. Jake was a true man of the  
water. Following his graduation from  
High School he joined the Navy. Later,  
he became a professional river guide,  
beginning with the American river in  
California and eventually progressing to  
guide rafts for various companies on the  
Colorado River. He was in his element  
riding rapids. Just beyond the release  
point that day on the Spokane River, we  
watched as the spume of ashes was caught  
by the ripples of a developing wave.  
Jake is eternally riding the rapids. ■

Janet Burnett Grossman July 24, 2021 on Mt. Spokane





# CLIMATE CHANGE, GARY SNYDER, THOMAS BERRY, AND YOU.

Do you remember [Gary Snyder](#)? He was an American man of letters, who was awarded the 1974 Pulitzer Prize for poetry for [Turtle Island](#) and the American Book Award for his book of poems, [Axe Handles](#), among many other awards and citations. He is associated with the “San Francisco Renaissance” and with the “Beat Generation,” but above all else he was a conservationist who embraced a philosophy or ecology of “place.”

I am not a fan of Snyder’s poetry, though its focus on the natural world and our relation to it is always clear and vital. In my copy of *Turtle Island*, there is a prose section written in 1969 titled *Four Changes*. Snyder refers to it as “a few practical and visionary suggestions.” What strikes me is how pertinent they are for us today in our confrontation with climate change. And, sadly, how long we have been talking about these things without doing much of anything about them. The issues Snyder identifies as requiring change, briefly noted, are:

- 1. Population** — “[Humanity] is but a part of the fabric of life—dependent on the whole fabric for his very existence.” He writes about this in relation to the many issues that impact a growing and unsustainable world population.
- 2. Pollution** — He notes two types: a. the excess of some fairly ordinary substances, e.g., smoke and solid waste, that overwhelm the planet’s capacity for absorbing or transmitting them; and b. chemicals and poisons resulting from technological advances “which the biosphere is totally unprepared for.” He notes DDT, and we could add a host of others from our experience, e.g., PCBs, PFAS, PBDEs, CO, etc.
- 3. Consumption** — “[Humanity’s] careless use of ‘resources’ and ... total dependence on certain substances such as fossil fuels ...” He goes on to point out “... that a continually ‘growing economy’ is no longer healthy, but a Cancer.”
- 4. Transformation** — Here Snyder talks about the ways we glorify “civilization” and urbanization to our detriment and have forgotten our dependence on an “ecologically-sensitive harmony-oriented wild-minded scientific-spiritual culture. ‘Wildness is the state of complete awareness. That’s why we need it.’”

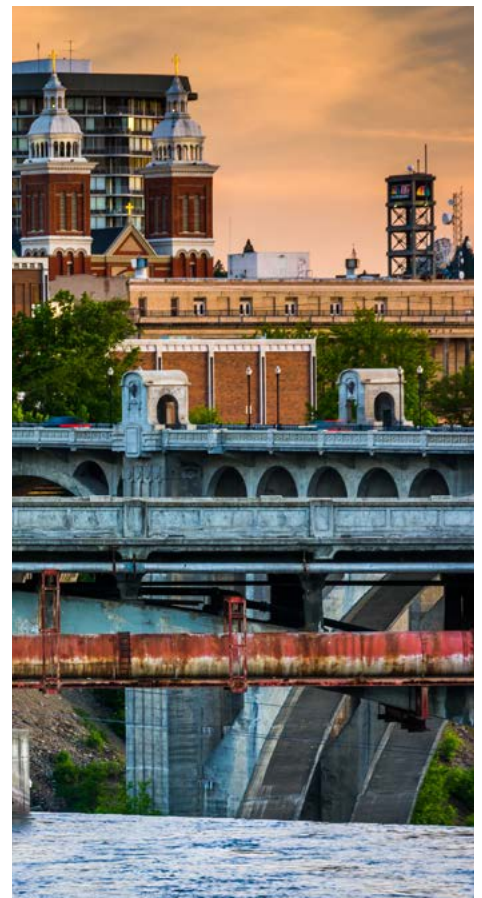
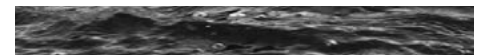
Friends, the challenges of climate change are overwhelming, and we should be doing everything we can as individuals and as Sierra Club to demand and support the changes necessary in government, business, recreation, travel, agriculture, etc., that will address them. I don’t have to list them, because you know what they are, and if you don’t, you have the resources of the Sierra Club to discover and work on them.

However, what is most important—because if you do this, all the rest will come quite naturally—is for you as an individual and/or as a family to see yourself as one interactive part of a natural community of species, everyone dependent on all the others. We need a change of mind, of worldview; we need Snyder’s “transformation.” You may not recognize your sacrifice of an airline flight, an herbicide, another fossil fuel vehicle, or a steak as changing the world or slowing climate change. But such disciplined action sustained over time will change you and how you see the world and your place in it.

Thomas Berry said there are three principles of the universe that must be appreciated. The first is diversity. “Diversity is the magic. ... The greater the diversity, the greater the perfection.” The second is subjectivity of all aspects. “The universe is a community

of subjects, not a collection of objects.” Communion is the third. ‘Diversity and subjectivity allow for communion.’

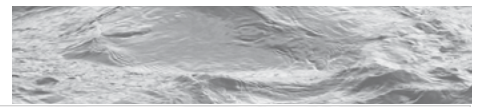
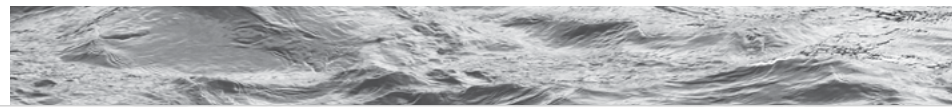
“We are members of the great universe community. We participate in this life. We are nourished by this community, we are instructed by this community, we are healed by this community. In and through this community, we enter into communion with that numinous mystery whence all things depend for their existence and their activity.” ■ — Tom Soeldner



Stock photo of downtown Spokane.







## SAVE SNAKE RIVER SALMON REMOVE SNAKE RIVER DAMS – HELP ORCA

There are increasingly positive signs that our efforts to restore Snake River salmon runs are working. Washington State Sierra Club and partners have focused the last months on encouraging the efforts of Governor Inslee and Senator Murray to develop a plan for achieving our goal, returning native salmon to perhaps the best salmon spawning resources in the lower 48 states. We are also working to encourage Senator Cantwell to join the effort.

**Save Our Wild Salmon**, our partner in this effort, explains it this way: “Lower Snake River dam removal will restore 140-mile river and 14,000+ acres of riparian habitat and bottomlands. It will cut dam-caused salmon mortality by at

least 50% and restore productive access for wild salmon and steelhead to 5,500+ miles of contiguous, pristine, protected upriver habitat in northwest Oregon, central Idaho and southeast Washington State. Much of this immense spawning/rearing habitat found above the lower Snake River is high elevation and thus provides a much-needed coldwater refuge as a critical buffer against a warming climate. Restoring a freely-flowing lower Snake River will deliver tremendous economic, ecological and cultural benefits to the tribal and non-tribal people of the Northwest and the nation.

You can read about the work Sierra Club is doing and find out how you can help [here](#). ■



*Sierra Club Washington State online newsletter March 2022*

## ONE RIVER, ETHICS MATTER” CONFERENCE THE SPOKANE RIVER – SEPTEMBER 27 AND 28

**U.S. and Canadian negotiators are busy deliberating over the future of the Columbia River Treaty and the addition of “Ecosystem-based Function” (health of the river) as a primary treaty purpose along with power generation and flood control. The One River, Ethics Matter conferences are facilitated by The Ethics & Treaty Project. Our work is hosted by the Columbia Institute for Water Policy and Sierra Club. We do not speak for indigenous sovereigns.**

The 9th OREM Conference, <https://riverethics.org/ethics-spokane-river>, will focus on the Spokane River and returning salmon to the upper Columbia and so also to the Spokane River. The conference will consider the righting of historic wrongs, advancing stewardship, and exploring who, especially at the treaty negotiating table, speaks for the voiceless, i.e., salmon, the River, and future generations. It will take place online

on the mornings of September 27 and 28. Watch for opportunities to register coming soon at the conference website.

Indigenous sovereigns are stepping in as leaders throughout the Columbia River watershed to protect and restore fish and wildlife. Local tribes are leading efforts to restore salmon to the Spokane River.

The Spokane River and tributaries were once home to one of the most bountiful salmon runs in the entire Columbia River Basin. Salmon were vital to the culture and sustenance of the local tribes, including the Spokane Tribe and the Coeur d’Alene Tribe.

Dams in the Spokane River and the Grand Coulee Dam destroyed these incredibly important salmon runs. The Grand Coulee Dam alone cut off more than 40% of total salmon and steelhead habitat in the Columbia Basin. Removing salmon from salmon people has

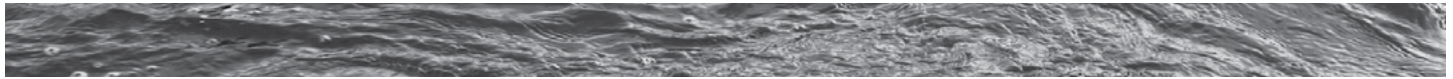


*The Spokane River low flow 2015 economic, health, and mental health consequences.*

Today, the tribes are working collaboratively with state, federal, and private entities to restore what was taken from them. The goal is to bring the salmon, steelhead, and lamprey back, reinvigorating and restoring the rich culture and traditions of the Spokane and Coeur d’Alene Tribes.

The OREM annual conference series is an ethics consultation process for improving the quality of ethical decision-making for the Columbia River. The conferences are interdisciplinary, each jointly hosted by an indigenous sovereign and an academic institution; they alternate between Canada and United States across the international border that divides the watershed. ■





## Water Conservation

*continued from page 1*

Many other Western U.S. cities have adopted much heavier regulations.

Mayor Nadine Woodward had already stated her opposition to the ordinance, so we citizens had an important role to play. The proposed law could die by veto if the council didn't see strong voter support. About 40 residents testified. A majority backed the ordinance. Some especially strong presentations were given by Margo Hill of Eastern Washington University and the Spokane Tribe, and Jerry White, Jr. of Spokane Riverkeepers.

**One of our ExCom members, Kathy Dixon, testified to the reality of climate change. She grew up in Spokane and has returned in her retirement. "I don't think we had these winds when I was a kid, and we definitely didn't have the summer fires that choke our skies. This year it's a cool and wet spring, so some people might be saying to themselves, 'I'm cold! There's no global warming,' but the truth is, climate change brings on erratic weather, and over time, it will make our already semi-arid climate even hotter and drier. Best to plan ahead."**

Many Sierra Club members probably already know not to sprinkle their lawns during midday when the sun evaporates a substantial amount of the water. According to the EPA, "Experts estimate that 50 percent of the water we use outdoors goes to waste from evaporation, wind, or runoff due to overwatering."

Regular readers of Nature's Advocate may also know that lowering the flow of the Spokane River would create unhealthful conditions for fish and other wildlife. Salmon and trout, in particular, require a strong, cool flow.

The ordinance was championed by City Council President Breann Beggs and City Council Member Lori Kinnear. Both of these city leaders earned our endorsement when they ran for office in 2019.

Our Sierra Club trio left while the council members were still debating. The outcome was unclear. But the next day, Lori Kinnear responded to our congratulations. "Thank you, we did pass a veto-proof ordinance. The water department will revisit water rates next year. More to come...." ■

— Kathy Dixon

\*The Raging Grannies blocked with their bodies the coal and oil trains passing through Spokane on their way to the Washington coast:

<https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2016/aug/31/protesters-block-rail-lines-on-trent-avenue>

They helped to firm up the "necessity defense" of those agitating for action against global warming:

<https://climatedefenseproject.org/climate-necessity-defense-recognized-in-state-of-washington>

### NOTE:

*Mayor Woodward vetoed the ordinance, and some of our UCR—Sierra Club Executive Committee were considering testifying remotely during their monthly meeting on June 6, which was set to meet at the same time as the city council meeting. They will then attempt to override the veto. Stay tuned for updates!*

