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NATURE'S Advocate

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SPOKANE RIVER 2022

SPOKANE RIVER WINS LONG-OVERDUE PCB POLLUTION CLEANUP PLAN IN EPA SETTLEMENT

On December 1 in the Federal Register, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published its settlement with Sierra Club, committing the agency to prepare a cleanup plan for cancer-causing PCBs that severely pollute the Spokane River. For the River and life that depends on it, this settlement caps 25 years of advocacy, including 10 years of litigation filed by Sierra Club, the Center for Environmental Law & Policy, and intervenor Spokane Tribe of Indians. Our lawsuit sought to enforce the Clean Water Act mandate for an EPA cleanup plan, necessary because of decades of inaction by the State of Washington.

PCBs are a dangerous chemical that harms aquatic and human life, causing cancer and other diseases. Tiny amounts of the toxin concentrate as it moves up the food chain. The Washington Department of Health's public health advisory, issued many years ago and still in effect, warns against consumption of PCB-contaminated fish in the Spokane River.

Under the settlement, called a "Consent Decree," EPA will complete a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) by September 2024. A TMDL is a science-based pollution cleanup plan. This one will be designed to ensure that the Spokane River meets protective water quality standards issued by Washington state and the Spokane Tribe.

PCB manufacture is banned in the U.S. Most PCBs entering the Spokane River pre-date the ban, with one major exception: Inland Empire Paper Co. (IEP) recycles paper printed with imported inks that contain PCBs.

The TMDL will require significant reductions in PCB pollution discharged to the Spokane River by the five industrial and municipal treatment plants located in Washington. In addition to IEP, Kaiser Aluminum and the Liberty Lake, Spokane County, and City of Spokane wastewater treatment plants each discharge PCBs to the river. All five discharge pipes are permitted by the Washington Department of Ecology, but these permits contain no limits on PCBs flowing into the Spokane River. The TMDL will change that.

The PCB cleanup plan is especially significant because of heavy use of the Spokane River by the public for recreation and the consumption of fish. Pollution cleanup is also needed to prepare the river for return of salmon, which were extirpated when dams were built.

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

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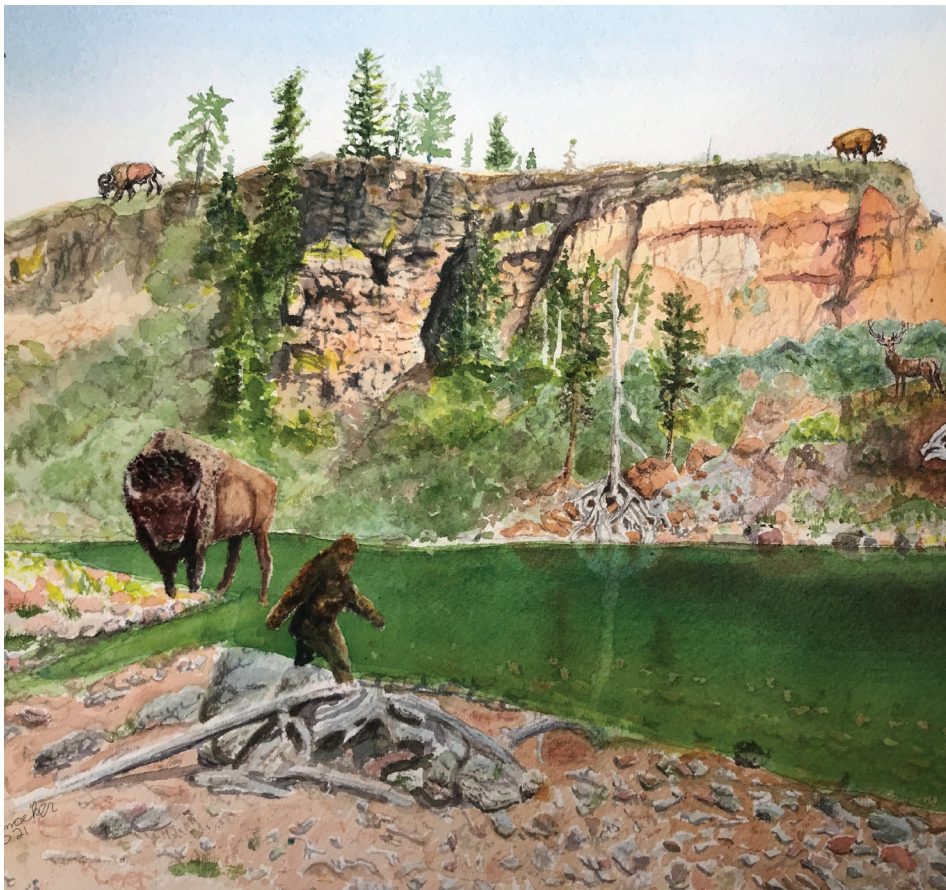
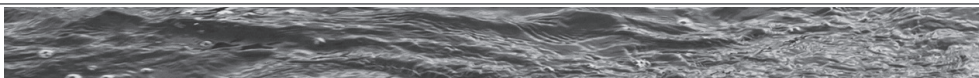
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Watercolor by Eric Anacker

WE WANT YOUR RIVER STORIES:

We would appreciate your Spokane River stories of about 150-200 words. We would also welcome photos and artwork, either to accompany those stories or to stand by themselves. We will try to publish all the stories that we get one way or another (Instagram, UCRG website, print)—sometimes edited for space or clarity—as long as those stories meet basic requirements of taste and legality.

To make your story most appealing, focus on evoking in your reader the experience that you had: the sights, the scents, the sounds, the feeling. Focus on one event only. Because we will print your name and/or your image (if you provide us with one) we will ask you to return a publication release form before we publish.

Please email: spokaneriverstories@gmail.com

UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER GROUP

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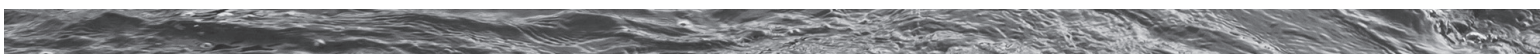
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Newsletter Editors

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Upper Columbia
River Group



UCRG: ANNUAL ELECTION

All Sierra Club members in our group are eligible to vote in this election. Vote for 3 positions on the Group Executive Committee (ExCom). **Ballots must be received by March 1, 2022 by 5 p.m.**

NOTE: Each member of a joint/household membership may vote, each using one of the two columns. Please tear off and mail this entire page to: Sierra Club, P.O. Box 413, Spokane, WA 99210.

FOR EXCOM (vote for 3)	VOTER 1	VOTER 2
Kathy Dixon	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evita Krislock	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Morton Alexander	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(write in) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(write in) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
(write in) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

MORTON ALEXANDER, has regularly attended the group's ExCom meetings as an observer/participant without a vote for the past three years. Morton is co-founder of Protect Mill Canyon Watershed, a Lincoln County community of organic farmers which has resisted the threatened contamination of their land, air, and water from a planned application of municipal sewage sludge to wheat fields above their canyon. The PMCW campaign succeeded in stopping the sewage sludge application. Morton is a retired community organizer and serves on the UCR Group Political Committee and on the Chapter's Toxics Issues Committee where he passionately pursues its goal to end land application of sewage sludge.

KATHY DIXON, currently serves as Secretary to the UCR Group ExCom and a member of the Spokane River Team. She was born in the Tri-Cities and raised in Spokane near the banks of the Spokane River. She has explored various spots in the immensely diverse habitat of the State of Washington, from desert to rainforest, ocean beach to mountain ridge.

MONICA LOWNEY, has been a WA state Sierra Club member since 2017. She has been involved in both the Chapter's Conservation Committee and Toxics Issues Committee. She has been an environmental advocate for 25 years. Her passion lies in water quality issues, our rivers, and aqua life as well as toxic remediation.

8TH ANNUAL "ONE RIVER, ETHICS MATTER" CONFERENCE RESTORING SALMON TO THE OKANAGAN AND UPPER COLUMBIA RIVERS

The 8th annual One River, Ethics Matter (OREM) conference was held virtually on November 17 and 18, 2021. There were over 600 registrants for this conference hosted by the Okanagan National Alliance (ONA - <https://www.sylx.org>) and the University of British Columbia-Okanagan (UBCO - <https://ok.ubc.ca>).

The OREM annual conference series is an ethics consultation process for increasing public understanding and improving the quality of ethical decision-making for the Columbia River and for modernizing the Columbia River Treaty. The 1964 Treaty between the U.S. and Canada governs management of this transboundary river. These conferences are interdisciplinary, each jointly hosted by an indigenous sovereign and an academic institution. OREM conferences alternate across the 49th parallel dividing the watershed between Canada and United States. For more information go online <https://riverethics.org>.

Dr. Jeannette Armstrong, a Sylx knowledge keeper and UBCO associate professor who was recently appointed a

Royal Society of Canada Scholar, was one of several speakers at the event. Other leaders and panel experts included Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, who is president of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, Okanagan Indian Band Chief Byron Louis, University of Idaho Professor Emerita Barbara Cosens, along with Indigenous youth experts, historians, biologists, policy officials and representatives from the Roman Catholic Church.

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip reminded the conference that the conversation about the river should be framed in terms of the future. We have a responsibility to restore the river's health. He and others emphasized that the loss of salmon is a multi-generational loss. Other speakers noted that the loss is clearly related to other trauma experienced by native peoples, e.g., poverty, substance abuse, boarding school abuses, and missing and murdered indigenous women. The legacy of human-caused impacts has changed Indigenous nations' ability to care for the river. But the salmon remember their

birthplace, their home, and working with them, Indigenous people can fulfill their responsibilities to salmon, their Creator, their ancestors, and each other.

The conference highlighted the very successful work of the ONA in the conservation, protection, restoration, and enhancement of fish stocks to the Okanagan River, and in particular with sockeye salmon. The Okanagan River sockeye population is one of only two remaining populations of sockeye salmon in the international Columbia River Basin. Historically, chinook, coho, chum, and steelhead were also indigenous salmon species in the Columbia River system, including the Okanagan Basin, but today they are either extinct or found in very low numbers.

OREM explores the ethical principles of **Justice** – righting historic wrongs, sharing equitably burdens and benefits in the watershed – and **Stewardship**. OREM also recognizes the ethical principle of **autonomy in treaty decision-making**, continued on page 4



UPPER COLUMBIA RIVER GROUP

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SPOKANE RIVER POEM

continued from page 3

i.e., the role of indigenous sovereigns to provide substituted judgment for salmon and the river. Ethical decision-making compels the U.S. and Canada to recognize indigenous sovereigns as surrogate decision-makers for the river and salmon. *(We, as conference facilitators, do not speak for indigenous sovereigns.)*

The One River, Ethics Matter conferences are facilitated by The Ethics & Treaty Project. This work is hosted by the Columbia Institute for Water Policy and Sierra Club. The E&T Project was initiated by members of the Upper Columbia River Group in 2013. The 9th OREM will focus on the Indigenous-led work to restore salmon to the Spokane River. We encourage you to attend.



Teakle Collection. Northwest Room.

You are my river.

I was born by your banks.

My brothers stomped on your muddy edge.

I was too young to follow their path,
or partake in piercing carp with homemade arrows.

When I was five,
big brothers taught me to swim
in Little Spokane waters.

River currents took me downstream a little too far.

My brothers proclaimed they would save me if need be.

I heartfully think they would.

As a teen,

I floated on innertubes in jean cutoffs and bikini top in your coolness
on hot summer days.

I nearly drowned a time or two,
but you always released your clutches.

Lucky, I guess.

You are my river.

Later in life,
my son caught your crawdads.

We had a big feast.

Shouldn't have eaten them,
but how could I not?

Spokane river you have always been part of me,
right from my start.

You are my river.

You are in my heart.

– BY SUSAN COE-LUNDSTROM