ETHICS CONFERENCE CALLS FOR MODERNIZING THE COLUMBIA RIVER TREATY

On May 13 about one hundred people from around the Columbia River Basin gathered at Gonzaga University to hear first-hand accounts of losses suffered by indigenous people due to dam-building on the Columbia River and to approve a Declaration on Ethics and Modernizing the Columbia River Treaty (see link at the end of this article) calling on Canada and the United States for specific actions to right historic wrongs and achieve stewardship in managing the river.

Conference speakers included Roman Catholic Bishop William Skylstad, Evangelical Lutheran Bishop Martin Wells, Okanagan Nation Alliance Executive Director Pauline Terbasket, Upper Columbia United Tribes Executive Director D.R. Michel, and many other indigenous voices. Historians, scientists, and Tribal and First Nation speakers recounted the damage to stream flows, cultural traditions, fish habitat, forests, and farmlands experienced by indigenous people and other residents along the river and its tributaries.

The Declaration will be used to promote a basin-wide respectful dialog in seeking ethics-based reforms to the Columbia River Treaty, which governs the management of the Columbia River shared by Canada and the U.S. It notes that the Columbia Basin Tribes in the U.S. and the First Nations in Canada were not even consulted during the Treaty’s negotiation and that their rights and management authorities were ignored in the Treaty ratified in 1964.

SPOKANE RIVER FLOWS: 2500 CFS FOR SUMMER SEASON FLOWS

ECOLOGY’S PROPOSED 850 CFS THREATENS RIVER, BUSINESSES, STATE’S LEGAL STANDING

Protecting Spokane River flows is important for fish and wildlife, boaters and floaters, businesses and jobs, and Washington’s legal standing with Idaho.

The Department of Ecology (Ecology) is proposing to set summer season minimum river flows at 850 cubic feet per second (cfs), an extremely low flow level that fails to protect the river and its values. Sierra Club and the Center for Environmental Law & Policy (CELP) are calling on the agency to set flows at 2500 cfs to maintain a fully functioning Spokane River.

FISH AND WILDLIFE NEED A FUNCTIONING SPOKANE RIVER

Thousands of people know the “Downriver Reach” and its exceptional values located from Spokane Falls to the pool behind Nine Mile Dam. All year long we are drawn to the beauty of the river, its waterfalls and gorge, pools and rapids. The river is home to fish and wildlife, and supports a vibrant and expanding sporting and recreation economy.

The City of Spokane Shoreline Master Program designates the shorelines of the Downriver Reach as either Natural or Urban Conservancy Environment. The Department of Fish & Wildlife designates this reach as Urban Natural Open Space. Habitat values are high, as stated in the City of Spokane Shoreline Inventory:

The reach, along with adjacent reaches [from Monroe dam to city limits], is particularly important in that they are almost entirely functional, natural habitats for fish and wildlife. . . .

Habitat for fish and wildlife appear to be functioning at excellent levels in this reach [Hangman Creek to TJ Meenach]. . . .

Habitat for fish and wildlife is functioning continued on page 3
The Declaration recognizes the Columbia River Pastoral Letter by the bishops of the international watershed as a template for decision-makers in both nations as they consider the moral dimensions of the decisions that result from the Treaty’s renegotiation. The Declaration sets forth eight principles for modernizing the Columbia River Treaty (see front page).

The U.S. State Department is expected to announce the United States’ negotiating position on the Columbia River Treaty later in 2014. U.S. agencies leading the review have recommended that the United States and Canada “develop a modernized framework for the Treaty that ensures a more resilient and healthy ecosystem-based function throughout the Columbia River Basin while maintaining an acceptable level of flood risk and assuring reliable facilities are built. Currently, the Sierra Club is involved with a Clean Water Act suit over coal falling off rail cars and into Hangman Creek in the area we will explore. This valley is home to diverse wildlife including but not limited to: blue heron, golden eagles, osprey, marmot, etc. Binoculars recommended. Jace Bylenga, Associate Organizer for the Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal Campaign, will lead and provide an update for the campaign. Join us at 6 pm for food and discussion. Hike to follow at 7 pm. This hike will traverse from the High Bridge Park picnic shelter, under the rail line bridge, across the creek, and up a trail on the bluff to Browne’s Addition and back again. Climbing the bluff is more moderate, but we’ll be sure to travel at a speed that will accommodate the group. Tennis shoes or hiking shoes are recommended.

**ETHICS CONF continued from front page**

**EXPLORING THE INLAND NORTHWEST WITH THE SIERRA CLUB**

**SUMMER IS HERE, SIGN-UP FOR OUTINGS!**

**OUTING WITH THE COAL CAMPAIGN: PICNIC & HIKE**

**THURSDAY, JULY 10TH 6-9 pm**

Meeting Location: High Bridge Park Picnic Shelter

Difficulty: Easy

Sign up: Jace Bylenga 509.209.2395 jace.bylenga@sierraclub.org

Join Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal Campaign and Upper Columbia River Group for a picnic style meal, social gathering, and a leisurely hike exploring the Hangman Creek area. Entree provided, bring sides and beverages to share.

Coal export proposals threaten to drastically impact the northwest. This outing will tour an area that could be uniquely impacted: the head of the “rail line funnel” where all coal export rail traffic would need to travel if proposed facilities are built. Currently, the Sierra Club is involved with a Clean Water Act suit over coal falling off rail cars and into Hangman Creek in the area we will explore. This valley is home to diverse wildlife including but not limited to: blue heron, golden eagles, osprey, marmot, etc. Binoculars recommended. Jace Bylenga, Associate Organizer for the Sierra Club’s Beyond Coal Campaign, will lead and provide an update for the campaign. Join us at 6 pm for food and discussion. Hike to follow at 7 pm. This hike will traverse from the High Bridge Park picnic shelter, under the rail line bridge, across the creek, and up a trail on the bluff to Browne’s Addition and back again. Climbing the bluff is more moderate, but we’ll be sure to travel at a speed that will accommodate the group. Tennis shoes or hiking shoes are recommended.

**DISHMAN HILLS HIKE: GLORIOUS SUNSET VIEWS**

**THURSDAY, JULY 24 6-9 pm**

Meeting Location: 3712 S. Thierman Road, Spokane

Difficulty: Moderate

Sign up: Jeff Lambert jlambert@envirosciencegroup.com

The hike is about 5 miles and will visit the relatively new Glenrose and Cliffs Conservation area in the Dishman Hills. Excellent views of Spokane and Spokane Valley. While we do encounter some steep sections, it’s still rated as moderate.

**SIGNING UP FOR SIERRA CLUB OUTINGS IN THE INLAND NORTHWEST JUST GOT EASIER.**

For either of these hikes and/or to check the entire summer Outings series, go online to http://www.meetup.com/Exploring-the-Inland-Northwest-with-Sierra-Club/

Contact: Carolyn Leon, Chair Sierra Club’s Outings Program lonestar4@aol.com
at or near pristine levels in this reach [TJ Meenach to city limits].

This is a critical reach of the river, and maintaining clean, cold water is essential to the health of local fisheries. A post-licensing study prepared by Avista indicates the importance of the reach downstream of Monroe Street dam as a spawning and rearing area for redband trout. This productive reach deserves full protection.

In addition, federal agencies have proposed discussion about restoring anadromous fish passage at Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams as part of the Columbia River Treaty update process. This puts the potential for return of salmon to the Spokane watershed on the table. Specifically the joint Bonneville Power and Army Corps of Engineers recommendation states:

The United States should pursue a joint program with Canada, with shared costs, to investigate and, if warranted, implement restored fish passage and reintroduction of anadromous fish on the main stem Columbia River to Canadian spawning grounds. . . .

The instream flow rule should anticipate and prepare for return of salmon to Spokane Falls.

In its draft 850 cfs proposal, Ecology failed to mention the unique and important public values of the Spokane River.

Ecology needs to acknowledge these values and, accordingly, increase flows to 2500 cfs.

**ETHICS AND THE SPOKANE RIVER**

The State of Washington holds in trust the Spokane River for its citizens. As such, the state has ethical duties to protect the river. Ecology’s failure to adequately protect Spokane River flows, and harm Washington State’s position - and the river - in adjudication with Idaho is a breach of public trust.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO: MAKE TIME FOR THE RIVER**

While we await Ecology’s formal public comment period on its proposed flows (probably to be held in the autumn of 2014), spend time this summer enjoying the Spokane River. Visit the waterfalls at Riverside State Park. If you fish, or boat, or just enjoy the neighborhood views of the Spokane River Gorge, then make time to reflect on the river. The Spokane River, the river’s fish and wildlife, and future generations will need your help. This summer make your personal commitment to protect home waters.

John Osborn, MD, Conservation Chair, UCR Group
CRITICAL CROSSROAD FOR WASHINGTON: MORE DIRTY COAL OR CLEAN ENERGY

While much of the Washington grid is powered by hydro and some wind and solar, a big chunk of it comes from coal-power. And while Avista and other utilities support clean-energy programs, they also rely on one of the biggest, most polluting coal-fired power plants in the West, located in Colstrip, Montana.

Right now, our state has a momentous opportunity to invest in clean energy and create good jobs in Washington State by moving beyond coal. Instead of continuing to rely on dirty coal, harming our health and the environment, we can call on utilities like Avista to completely replace coal with cleaner forms of energy.

Over 140 coal plants across the country, including the Northwest’s TransAlta and Boardman plants, are on the path to retirement as our nation moves away from it’s reliance on coal. This opens the doors to a flood of clean-energy investment and a new era of healthy air and clean power.

Our future lies not in antiquated coal-fired power, but in making homes more comfortable, lowering cost, and creating a wave of innovation in the wind and solar industries. As we upgrade our buildings and invest in new sources of energy, we will create jobs, stimulate new technology and businesses, and unleash a diverse and safe energy future.

To get involved with this developing work, contact Jace Bylenga with the Beyond Coal’s Spokane office.

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