

In September 2010, EPA Region 10 released the Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Action Plan www.epa.gov/region10/columbia. The action plan provides 5 initiatives, and 61 specific actions to help make the Columbia River a cleaner, and healthier place. EPA has issued a challenge to Columbia River Basin partners to commit to one or more of the 61 actions and report progress back to EPA for an end of year annual report. Industry, government and others are taking EPA's challenge and already are working to carry out these actions.

A Snapshot of the Action Plan

The Action Plan gives a 5-year framework for a collaborative, Basin-wide approach to toxics reduction. The initiatives and some key actions under each are:

(1) Increase public understanding and political commitment to toxics reduction

- Continue Working Group
- Establish executive level collaboration and affect national dialogue
- Work closer with Canadian government
- Provide recognition for Toxics Reduction actions and increase River celebrations
- Publish newsletter and continue workshops

(2) Increase toxics reduction actions

- Need more government and industry leadership on pollution prevention/green chemistry
- Increase collection programs for pharmaceuticals, pesticides, mercury
- Increase agriculture programs to reduce sediment and pesticide use including Integrated Pest Management and Pesticide Stewardship Partnerships
- Continue and expand Oregon human health criteria revision and other human healthy revision work efforts to increase human health protection
- Coordinate with ongoing efforts such as the Oregon Toxic Reduction Strategy: <http://www.deq.state.or.us/toxics/> and Washington Ecology's Toxics Threat Initiative: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/toxics/index.htm>

(3) Increase monitoring for source identification, and then focus attention to reduce toxics

- Identify contaminants of concern for priority focus
- Identify sources of contamination and establish toxics reduction efforts which include effectiveness monitoring.
- Continue to seek and leverage resources to supplement existing monitoring by Agencies, organizations, and Tribes in the Basin
- Support watershed-based monitoring efforts



that link directly to toxic reduction efforts, such as TMDLs, source assessments, and Pesticide Stewardship Partnerships

- Develop accessible, public-friendly reports to share monitoring information broadly

(4) Develop regional, multi-agency research and monitoring

- Identify and inventory existing toxics research being conducted in the Basin
- Convene scientists to develop Columbia River research plan
- Conduct research based on research plan priorities
- Develop indicators of ecosystem health
- Conduct "Control Studies" to evaluate the effectiveness of Best Management Practices, toxics reduction efforts, and emerging reduction strategies

(5) Develop a data management system to share toxics information around the Basin

- Convene scientists to discuss options for managing Columbia River Basin toxics data
- Evaluate how other large aquatic ecosystems manage data
- Ensure inclusion of spatial component (latitude, longitude) in new and available data, conduct spatial analysis.
- Create data stewardship program hosted and managed by a single entity

Background

The Columbia River Basin, one of the world's great river basins, covers about 260,000 square miles of the North American landscape. However the Basin is contaminated with many toxic pollutants, and public and scientific concern about the health of the Basin is increasing. Toxics in air, water, and soil threaten the health of people, fish, and wildlife living in the Basin as these contaminants move through the food web. The Columbia River tribal people have depended on salmon and lamprey for thousands of years for human, spiritual and cultural sustenance. Recent studies have shown that tribal people consume more fish than average fish consumers, and those fish contain many contaminants, some pose a significant risk to human health.

In 2005, EPA joined with federal, state, tribal, local, industry, agriculture and non-profit partners to form the collaborative Columbia River Toxics Reduction Working Group and identified a goal to reduce toxics in the Columbia River Basin. In 2006, EPA recognized the Columbia River Basin as one of EPA's priority Large Aquatic Ecosystems for priority protection and restoration.

In January 2009, the Columbia River Basin State of the River Report for Toxics www.epa.gov/region10/columbia was completed by EPA and our partners. The report focused on four toxic contaminants found throughout the Basin at levels that could adversely impact people, fish, and wildlife: Mercury; DDT (Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane); PCBs (Polychlorinated Biphenyls); and PBDEs (Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers). The report committed to an Action Plan with a comprehensive strategy to reduce toxics in the Basin which was collaboratively developed by the Columbia River Toxics Reduction Working Group.



Salmon need a healthy river habitat to thrive and reproduce

Learn More, Get Involved

Reducing toxics in the Columbia River Basin continues to be a comprehensive, coordinated effort tapping into the expertise of many partners. EPA and its partners are committed to reducing toxics and care deeply about the Basin. We know our mission is not easy and will take many years. The involvement of all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the public is critical to restore the Basin's health for now and for future generations.

Mark Your Calendars

Next Columbia River Toxics Reduction Working Group meeting:
March 8, 2011 -- Portland, OR

For More Information:

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