

Columbia River Toxics Reduction Newsletter



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Photo by Susan Hess

In This Issue:

Working Together
to Reduce Toxics in the
Columbia River Basin

Come to September 21
Toxics Reduction
Working Group meeting
– Goldendale, WA

Maryhill Museum's
Native American Gallery

Columbia River
Restoration Act of 2010

Unity – a poem
by Dave Densmore

Pharmaceuticals: Out of
Water, Out of the Medicine
Cabinet, Off the Streets

Places of the
Columbia River Basin –
The Salmon River

Washington State Moving
Forward With Monitoring
for Persistent
Bioaccumulative Toxics

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Working Together to Reduce Toxics in the Columbia River Basin

The magnificent and precious Columbia River Basin is one of the world's great river basins, covering a major part of the North American landscape. The Basin is contaminated with many toxic pollutants that threaten the health of people, fish, and wildlife. Subsistence fishing by tribal people provides an even greater threat to tribal communities who have depended on fish for many generations. To protect people and the environment, EPA created the Columbia River Toxics Reduction Strategy to reduce toxics in Basin fish, water, and sediment. A large, diverse group of partners, including state, tribal, and local governments; other federal agencies; the Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership; citizen groups; and industry, is now collaborating on actions to reduce toxics throughout the Basin.



Come to September 21 Working Group Meeting – Goldendale, WA

The next meeting of the Columbia River Toxics Reduction Working Group will be held Tuesday, September 21, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., at the lovely Maryhill Museum in Goldendale, WA. Presentations include:

- Merlin Berg of the Wy'East Resource Conservation & Development Council to discuss
- the organophosphate reductions achieved with the Integrated Fruit Production Network;
- the Working Group will present the 2010 Columbia River Hero Award;
- an update on the September public release of the Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Action Plan;
- an update on EPA Lower Columbia River Superfund Site Assessment Work;
- an update on EPA Upper Columbia River Monitoring Work; and
- Brett VandenHeuvel of Columbia Riverkeeper will share observations and lessons learned from his three weeks in the Gulf of Mexico.

Maryhill Museum's Native American Gallery

by Mary Schlick

The Native American gallery at Maryhill Museum of Art is noted for its fine collection of American Indian baskets. One of the largest displays of such basketry in the world, it often surprises visitors with the array of tribal groups represented. In museums with larger collections, much is in storage. Maryhill, too, has baskets in storage. However, the rotunda designed to serve as a garage for Sam Hill's stately home offered Maryhill an unusual space to exhibit a broad variety of fine works from tribes across the continent.

Because of its importance to the region, the work of the Columbia River and Plateau peoples are featured near the entrance to the gallery. A major portion of these items were given to Maryhill by descendants of an Upper Chinookan leader from the Hood River area, as well as by other Gorge residents who were this family's friends and neighbors.

These works of art and skill enriched the daily lives of those who were first to live in the Columbia Gorge. They continue to enrich our lives today.



Basket weaver Nah-Wy-Yatt Tahkeal with Fidelia Meninick at Celilo. Photo by James Rayner, 1950.



Klikitat basket of berries. Photo by W.T.Schlick



Klikitat baskets at Maryhill. Photo by Mary Schlick

Unity

By Dave Densmore

As I looked out across our quiet, sparkling river
I remembered the sound of engines in the past,
And the sight of the water born lights twinkling
Signs of a profession, we thought would forever last.

Columbia... river of light and sound, teeming with life,
As harvesters rendezvoused with fish,
So those not so fortunate to harvest their own,
Could still have this beautiful, bounty on their dish.

These men continue to do the work they love,
Although there are so many trying to shut them down.
Doesn't it seem counterproductive to eliminate
The strongest advocates, the river has ever found.

We've been divided, and almost conquered,
By industry's, self interested, hype.
Forgetting we're all on the same page.
No matter the reason, or fishing gear type.

But now we've all stood united,
Sports, Commercial fishermen, and guides,
Protecting something precious we all love,
Refusing the wool pulled over our eyes.

We're holding off LNG and wet land dredging,
Showing the impact of united voice,
Joining hands and making a difference,
Refusing to surrender our right of choice.

Ahh, wouldn't it be great to continue
To show this vigilant united might?
We CAN, because sport AND commercial
Are actually, BOTH on the side of right.

We're all striving for a clean healthy river,
And strong plentiful runs of fish,
We ALL want the same damn thing!
So what could be more right than this?

I say to all, we are not each others enemy,
And common sense must prevail,
Or we could still, all end up losers,
The struggles and fighting...to no avail.

Whither fisherman, boater, or simply,
Someone who loves the river, for beauty's sake,
Let's quit fighting each other, unite and STOP,
Those who, just come here to take.

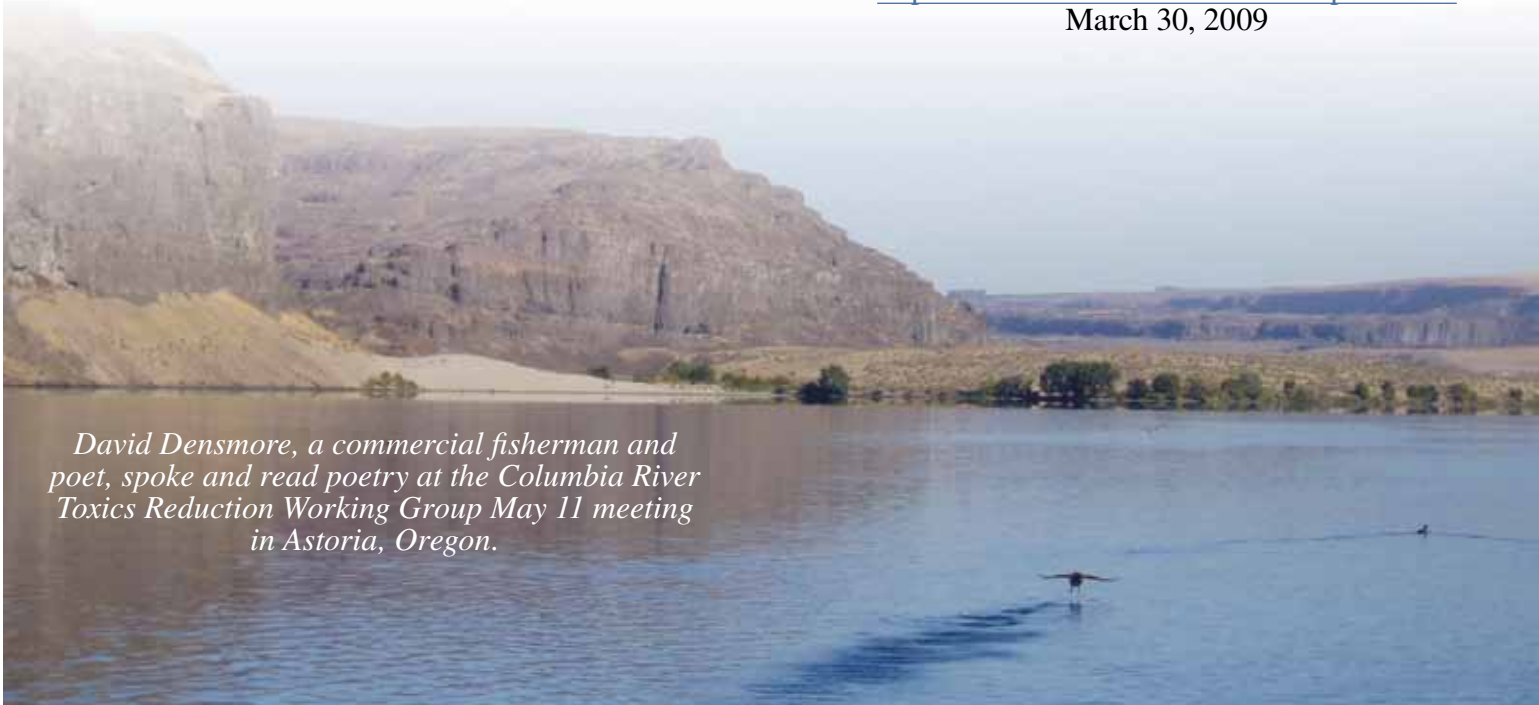
This river and strong fish runs, our heritage,
To harvest however we each may choose.
But we must stand strong...TOGETHER,
There is far too much to lose.

We are all the people of the river,
Responsible for her continued recovery and health,
With clean water and plentiful fish runs,
THAT, is our true heritage, our great Northwest wealth.

Dave Densmore

<http://www.davedensmorefishermanpoet.com/>

March 30, 2009



David Densmore, a commercial fisherman and poet, spoke and read poetry at the Columbia River Toxics Reduction Working Group May 11 meeting in Astoria, Oregon.

Pharmaceuticals: Out of Water, Out of the Medicine Cabinet, Off the Streets

By Susan Hess

My dental surgeon gave me a prescription for 20 oxycontin tablets when he put in a dental implant two years ago. Having little pain, I only took two pills. Six months later, I had to get two more implants. The office gave me a handful of prescriptions. One of which, it turns out, was another 20 oxycontin. But I didn't find that out until I got home from the drug store and compared bottles. Again used two. I don't want to trouble you with the whole story, but a year later one of the implants had to be replaced. Surgery. Left office with fistful of prescriptions. Used one pill.

The handful of prescriptions the dentist had given me also included an antibiotic, which I quickly found out I was allergic to, and I was left with an almost full bottle of clindamycin. Luckily my insurance covered the cost, but I didn't want the remaining pills in the house. It didn't seem like a good idea to put them in the trash and certainly not flush them down the toilet.

Studies around the country confirmed the fear that all the pharmaceuticals entering our rivers and lakes were harming fish and other aquatic life. Pharmaceuticals are designed to alter biological processes. People use more and more drugs every year.

Spring 2009 when I was looking for a way to dispose of my medications, I read about an Oregon statewide Drug Turn-In Day <http://www.orpartnership.org/web/CARSA/drug.take.back.program.asp> planned for March 13. Thirty-one Oregon communities would be holding collection events. I took all the oxycontin, the clindamycin, and some other no

longer needed pills and over-the-counter medications to The Dalles, the site nearest us.

In that one day, almost 2400 people across Oregon turned in two tons of medications, said Leanna Lindquist, President, Oregon Medical Association Alliance <http://www.theoma.org/Page.asp?NavID=40>, one of the event sponsors. People brought

all types of pharmaceuticals: antibiotics, allergy medications, pain control meds, heart meds, blood pressure, etc. The police were a key element of the program, because only law enforcement officials can handle the returned narcotics, like oxycontin. The drugs were taken to Albany and incinerated.

continued on page 5



National Take Back Initiative: Saturday, September 25, 2010. The DEA coordinating with state and local law enforcement agencies is holding collection events from 10:00 a.m. through 2:00 p.m. at sites throughout the country. To find a site near you: <http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/takeback/>

The following places **do not** take controlled substances:

- Metro: Portland, Oregon
- Some Safeways in Portland and Vancouver, Washington
- Newberg, Oregon is working with the long term care facilities in a medication take back program.
- [disposemymeds.org](http://www.disposemymeds.org) <http://www.disposemymeds.org/> lists pharmacies around the country that take unwanted consumer medications
- If there is not a disposal site or event near you, the website Smart Disposal <http://www.smarxtdisposal.net/> shows how to dispose of medicines that protect you and the environment.

Pharmaceuticals: Out of Water, Out of the Medicine Cabinet, Off the Streets, continued

A number of turn-in programs have recently started, driven by the fact that for diverse interest groups they solve problems: social and environmental. For example, in Astoria, Oregon, The Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership <http://www.lcrep.org/about-us> received a \$40,000 grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The grant funds a one year medication turn-in program. Hospice patients are given envelopes to put medications in that they no longer need; the envelopes go to the Astoria Police Department.

The program combines the needs of hospice, the police department and the Estuary Partnership, said Debrah Marriott, the Estuary Partnership's Executive Director. The Estuary Partnership's mission is preserving and enhancing the Columbia River estuary's water quality for its biological and human communities. This program offers a way to keep pharmaceuticals from getting into the river.

The police want to reduce street use of pharmaceuticals. For hospice patients and their families, the program provides a way to safely dispose of medications. At the end of life, patients' medications change quickly, a patient can easily take the wrong medication and families can be left with many unused medications. Lindquist adds another reason families should get rid of unused medications, "We explain to some people: You know, the reason your teenage nephew wants to use your upstairs bathroom is the vicodin in that medicine cabinet."

The take-back programs will solve only part of the problem. Pharmaceuticals get into our rivers and lakes because our bodies excrete them. At this time waste water treatment plants don't filter them out. Farm animals also excrete them, if fed hormones and antibiotics. A hospital nurse who asked to remain anonymous says some nurses put narcotics down the drain, because they don't want 'the patients licking the trash.'

What do we do with our medications so that we don't give them to the fish or to our teenage nephews? So far, turn-in programs are rare (see box for one coming up). But these programs' ability to solve problems for many people as well as the public participation in them may encourage more to start up.

Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Action Plan

EPA will be releasing the Final Columbia River Toxics Reduction Action Plan on September 23, 2010, at the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Pendleton, OR, in a collaborative press event with EPA Region 10 Regional Administrator Dennis McLerran and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation who have provided national leadership on human health protection and toxics reduction. This collaborative action plan, developed over the past 2 years by the Columbia River Toxics Reduction Working Group, is a follow up the Columbia River Basin State of the River Report for Toxics and includes 5 initiatives and over 60 actions to reduce toxics in the Columbia River Basin. Thanks to all who have worked hard for the past couple of years to make this report a reality. After the official release, the Action Plan will be found on the EPA's Columbia River website: www.epa.gov/region10/columbia and printed copies will be available by contacting Mary Lou Soscia or Deb Sherbina.

Columbia River Restoration Act of 2010

The Columbia River Restoration Act was introduced in the U.S. Congress earlier this year (HR 4652 and S 3055) to provide Congressional authorization for a collaborative toxics reduction work effort in the Columbia River Basin. The bill builds upon and works with the Lower Columbia River National Estuary Program. The bill was first introduced in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Senate Environment and Public Works Committee on February 24, 2010. On June 29, 2010, the Senate Committee approved the proposed legislation.

In the Congressional process, the next steps for this proposed legislation would be action by the full Senate, action by the House Committee and action by the full House for final passage of the Bill. Find the Senate version at: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=s111-3550>; and the House version can be found at: <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-4652>.

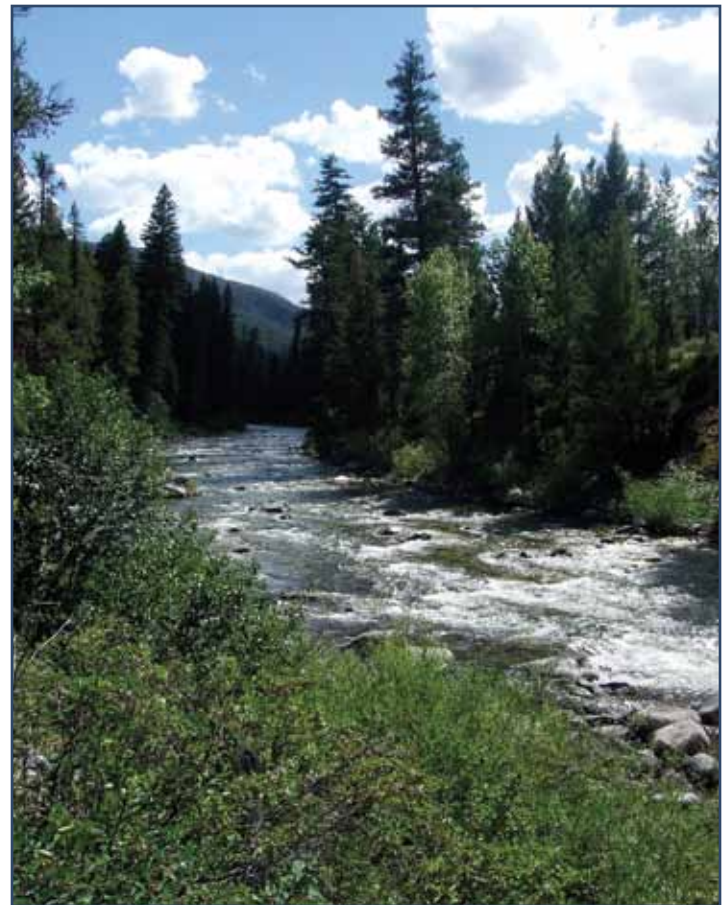
Places of the Columbia River Basin – The Salmon River

Despite taking up only six percent of the land area of the Columbia River Basin, the Salmon River basin provides more anadromous fish spawning area than any other subbasin in the Columbia River Basin. The Salmon River basin encompasses a rich network of tributaries: East Fork, Pahsimeroi, Lemhi, North Fork, Middle Fork, South Fork and Little Salmon Rivers; and Valley, Yankee Fork, Panther, Chamberlain, Slate and Allison Creeks.

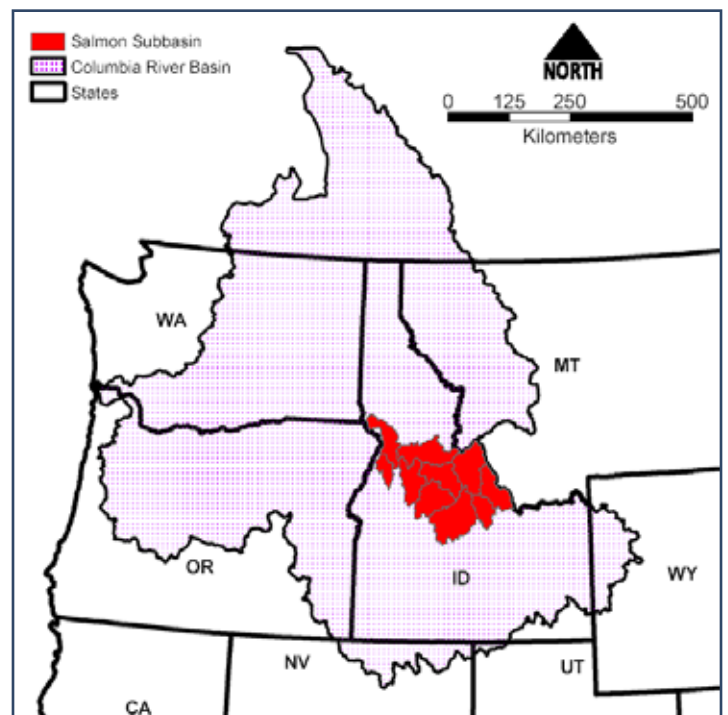
The Salmon River is the greatest of Snake River tributaries and a crown jewel in the Columbia River ecosystem. It is America’s longest undammed river outside Alaska that flows without major diversions. The river originates in the Sawtooth Mountains of central Idaho near 12,662 foot high Mount Borah and flows 410 miles north and west. After flowing west through the River of No Return Wilderness, it enters the Snake River in the Hells Canyon Reach. At just over 14,000 square miles, the Salmon River subbasin is the largest in the Columbia River system, excluding the Snake River. Public lands account for over 90 percent of the land area of the subbasin, and the Frank Church–River of No Return Wilderness Area—one of the five wilderness areas within the basin—is the largest in the contiguous United States. These large protected areas not only provide refuge for wild salmon, but serve as habitat strongholds for wildlife, some imperiled or absent across much of their historic range.

The watershed produces 39 percent of the spring Chinook salmon, 45 percent of the summer Chinook salmon, and 25 percent of summer steelhead. Historically, anadromous fish were significant sources of nutrients for other fish species and wildlife in the subbasin. Many resident salmon populations in the Salmon subbasin’s undeveloped areas are recognized as some of the strongest in the region. Yet the salmon and steelhead trout in these areas are listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), as a result of the impact of their migration through the eight hydroelectric dams on the mainstem Columbia and Lower Snake Rivers (part of the Federal Columbia River Power System) and other habitat impacts from mining, grazing, irrigation, road building and logging. High sedimentation is the major water quality impact in the Salmon River. Snake River Sockeye are listed as Endangered under the ESA and Spring/Summer Chinook, Fall Chinook, and Summer Steelhead are listed as Threatened.

The Salmon River watershed is yet another reminder of the magnificence and diversity of the Columbia River Basin.



Johnson Creek, a tributary to the South Fork Salmon River Subbasin, is important to the Nez Perce Tribe for Summer Chinook Salmon



Location of the Salmon subbasin, Idaho, within the Columbia River basin.

Washington State Moving Forward With Monitoring for Persistent Bioaccumulative Toxics

The Washington Department of Ecology initiated the Washington State Toxics Monitoring Program in 2000 to investigate the occurrence and concentrations of toxic chemicals in the State's waterbodies. One objective of the Monitoring Program is to conduct trend monitoring for persistent bioaccumulative toxics (PBT). PBTs are compounds that degrade slowly, travel long distances, and tend to build up in tissue. They can have adverse health effects on humans, fish, and wildlife. Ecology identified 27 substances on their PBT list www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/swfa/pbt/.

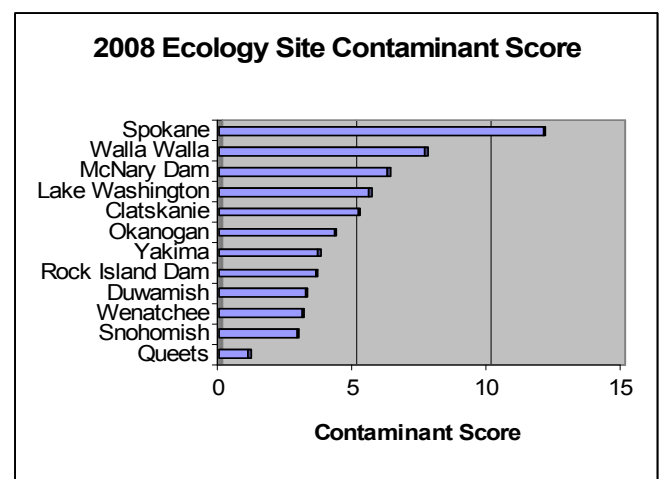
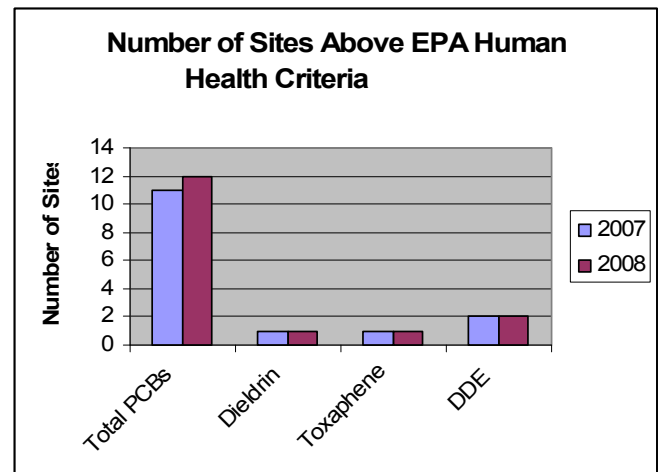
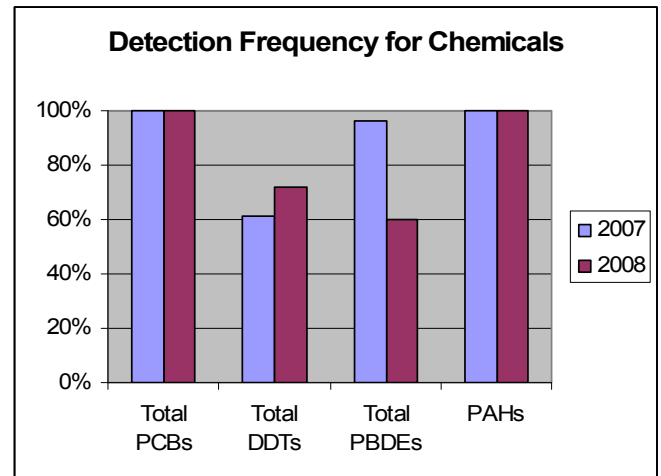
Ecology began trend monitoring for mercury (Hg) in 2005. In 2007, PBT trend monitoring was expanded to include organic compounds, including chlorinated pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs). Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and lead were added to the program in 2008. Evaluating trends in chemical concentrations over time is important in determining whether we're reducing toxics and helps us prioritize where reduction actions may be of most benefit. Find more detailed information on the program at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/eap/toxics/wstmp.htm.

Sampling for organic compounds was done at 12 sites during the spring and fall of 2007 and 2008. Eight of the monitoring sites were in the Columbia River Basin: 5 rivers (Okanogan River, Spokane River, Wenatchee River, Yakima, and Walla Walla) and 3 on the Main Stem of the Columbia (near Rock Island Dam, near McNary Dam, and near Clatskanie, OR). The analyses for temporal trends in organic compounds will not occur until after the fourth year of sampling (2011).

The study evaluated the data looking at several areas: frequency of chemical detections; spatial patterns; seasonal patterns; comparison with water quality standards; and a site scoring index developed by Ecology. This article only reports the frequency of detection; number of sites above EPA human health criteria; and Ecology site scoring.

Conclusions

- The widest varieties of chemicals were detected in the Lower Columbia and Walla Walla Rivers.
- Similar seasonal variations were seen in both 2007 and 2008, with more chemicals detected in the spring than in the fall -- except PBDEs.
- The highest concentrations of chemicals were found in the same waterbodies in both 2007 and 2008.
- Only four chemicals exceeded EPA's national recommended human health based criteria; PCBs in all water bodies except the Queets; Dieldrin in the Yakima; Toxaphene in the Walla Walla; and DDE at Rock Island Dam (2007), Okanogan (2008), Yakima (2007), and Walla Walla (2008).





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