



EPA Announces Tribal Grants to Reduce Toxics in the Columbia River Basin

COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN RESTORATION PROGRAM

ABOUT THE COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN RESTORATION FUNDING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Congress amended the Clean Water Act in 2016, which required EPA to establish a Columbia River Basin Restoration Program. EPA was directed to develop a voluntary, competitive grant program for eligible entities to fund environmental protection and restoration programs throughout the Basin. Eligible entities include state, Tribal, and local governments, regional water pollution control organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and soil and water conservation districts. Funded work must be for the purpose of environmental protection and restoration activities within the Columbia River Basin and may include programs, projects, and studies.

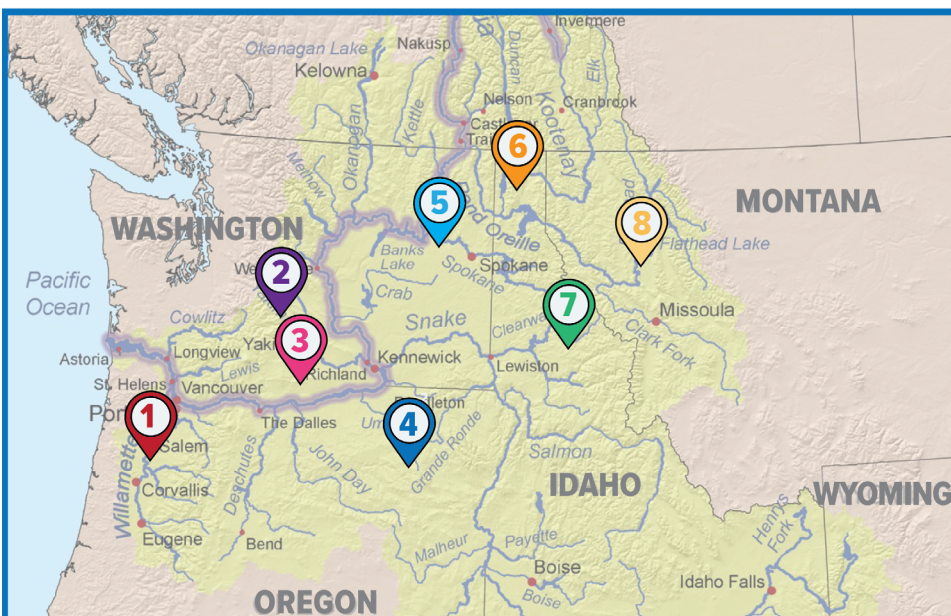
The **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)** infused the Columbia River Basin Restoration Program (CRBRP) with \$79 million in funding, of which over \$15 million has been awarded to Tribes. The mandatory cost share requirement was waived for these grants. The CRBRP will assist these Tribes as they implement the *Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Action Plan* and the *Lower Columbia River Estuary Plan - Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan* and conduct activities under the Clean Water Act Section 123, the Columbia River Basin Restoration Act (Act).

Federally recognized Tribal Governments were eligible to apply for funding to implement projects that address at least one of the following categories as identified in the Act:

- 1. Eliminating or reducing pollution**, including strategies or projects to reduce the flow of toxics into streams of the Columbia River Basin.
- 2. Cleaning up contaminated sites**, including targeted small-scale clean-up actions.
- 3. Improving water quality** to reduce toxics in the Columbia River Basin.
- 4. Reducing runoff** through agricultural best management practices and/or sediment and stormwater runoff controls, including green infrastructure.
- 5. Protecting habitat** to reduce the impact of toxics on Columbia River Basin fish and wildlife.
- 6. Promoting citizen engagement or knowledge** by increasing engagement and communication with individual community members (such as local, state and Tribal environmental managers, and/or NGOs), creating bi-lingual outreach and education materials on the topic of toxics reduction, green chemistry pilot projects, and/or sharing success stories.

Across all categories, EPA funded projects that focus on toxics and their impact on human health, fish, and wildlife; as well as projects with climate change and adaptation co-benefits.

2023 TRIBAL GRANTEES



- 1** Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Toxics Reduction Planning and Action Project
- 2** Yakima River Waste Assessment and Cleanup (Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation)
- 3** Lyle Falls Waste Assessment and Cleanup (Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation)
- 4** Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Strategic Pollution Prevention and Toxics Reduction Planning and Implementation Project
- 5** Spokane Tribe of Indians Toxics Reduction Program
- 6** Reclamation and Restoration of Ambush Rock (Kootenai Tribe of Idaho)
- 7** Nez Perce Reservation Surface and Groundwater Pollutant Reduction Project
- 8** Investigation and Risk Assessment of Residential Septic Systems Distribution on the Flathead Indian Reservation (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes)



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BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE LAW FUNDING

The EPA Columbia River Basin Program received \$79 million in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) in 2021. This funding provides EPA the ability to grow the Columbia River Basin Restoration Program and significantly increase competitive grants to reduce toxics. This historic funding opportunity also allowed EPA to waive match requirements for Tribal Governments in support of the agency's environmental and tribal justice priorities. EPA is very close to completing the awarding of all these BIL funds.

1 **Grand Ronde Toxics Reduction Planning and Action Project**

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde will launch a new toxics reduction project to develop priority strategies and take concrete actions to reduce toxic pollution in the Willamette River Basin. EPA funding will support the Toxics Reduction Planning and Action Project, which will allow the Tribe to develop a formalized toxics reduction plan for the first time. The project will benefit the health and well-being of Tribal members and improve water quality for fish and wildlife. The project area is the Willamette River Basin, with an emphasis on the Tribe's reservation in both Polk and Yamhill Counties and Grand Ronde properties. Over a five-year period, the project will inventory the Tribe's current toxic reduction measures, assess community and government priorities, develop a toxics reduction plan, and implement near-term actions. By reducing toxic pollution and exposure to harmful chemicals, the grant will benefit the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community and Willamette Valley communities that rely on clean water.

Federal Award Amount: \$1,999,055

2 **Yakima River Waste Assessment and Cleanup – Identification of Future Needs, Planning, Implementation, Community Outreach and Education**

The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation will conduct planning, removal, and disposal of garbage and waste material from an approximately 12-mile reach of the Yakima River within the Yakama Reservation to improve community health and protect and enhance Yakama First Foods and medicines. The cleanup project will identify impacts to human health and the environment, remove contamination, and lessen impacts to aquatic and riparian habitat from garbage and waste that are detrimental to the recovery of Endangered Species Act listed salmonids and important treaty resources. The effort will create a Quality Assurance Project Plan, Standard Operating Procedures, and a Health and Safety Plan to guide cleanup activities. In addition, an outreach and education strategy will build community support. The approach will be based on collaboration during all phases, including developing a framework for identification, assessment, cleanup and stewardship of other sites and for continued stewardship at sites already cleaned up in the Columbia River Basin, the Yakama Reservation, and the Yakima River Basin. This project will provide support to underserved communities, including not only Tribal Members, but also other communities that rely on fish and food sources derived from the Yakima River and Columbia River Basins. **Federal Award Amount: \$2,000,000**

3 **Lyle Falls Waste Assessment and Cleanup—Identification of Future Needs, Planning, Implementation, Community Outreach and Education**

The Lyle Falls site is an important traditional and cultural area for the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. This project will involve planning and implementation to remove and dispose of garbage and waste material from the Lyle Falls site on Klickitat River in Klickitat County. The approach will be based on collaboration during all phases, including developing a framework for identification, assessment, cleanup, and for continued stewardship of sites already cleaned up in the Columbia River Basin. The cleanup project will identify impacts to human health and the environment and support work to prevent toxics from entering the environment. These efforts will reduce impacts to aquatic and riparian habitat from garbage and waste that are detrimental to the recovery of Endangered Species Act listed salmonids and Tribally important species. Cleanup of these areas is essential to improving community health as well as protecting and enhancing Yakama First Foods and medicines. This project will provide support to underserved communities, including not only Tribal Members, but also other communities that rely on fish and food sources derived from the Klickitat River and Columbia River Basin.

Federal Award Amount: \$2,000,000

4 CTUIR Strategic Pollution Prevention and Toxics Reduction Planning and Implementation Project

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) will develop a strategic pollution prevention plan to target toxics reduction actions in the Umatilla, Walla Walla, Snake, and John Day tributaries to the Columbia River. The comprehensive inventory of toxics will prioritize reduction actions. The project will focus on toxics and their impact on human health and the First Foods, which are a critical component of CTUIR Tribal member diets, and all depend on a healthy and functioning river and floodplain. The CTUIR will utilize the CTUIR Strategic Energy Plan, Climate Adaptation Plan, the River and Upland Visions, First Foods Policy, and other policies to inform the reduction of toxics in the Umatilla, Walla Walla, Snake, and John Day sub-basins with the primary focus on the Umatilla and Walla Walla sub-basins. The grant will allow the project team to hire a toxicologist, interns, and a technician to uphold the Tribes' access to First Foods as protected by the Treaty of 1855 and the promise to care for these foods in the future. Protecting these rivers through agricultural best practices, green infrastructure, pollution prevention, cleanup actions, and community outreach will ensure that the Columbia River benefits from these toxics reduction actions. **Federal Award Amount: \$1,990,990**

5 Spokane Tribe of Indians Toxics Reduction Program

The Spokane Tribe of Indians will work to restore Tribal waters to swimmable, fishable, and drinkable for Tribal sovereignty and subsistence. This six-year project will reduce toxics in the Columbia River Basin using a two-tiered approach that includes the formation of a Tribal Toxics Reduction Program (TRP) to identify, manage, and implement toxics cleanup and mitigation activities. The TRP will also lead the planning and implementation of projects that address known toxics issues on the Spokane Indian Reservation. This includes five projects ready for comprehensive planning or implementation: the cleanup of lead at two shooting ranges in the Chamokane Creek watershed (Project 1); testing and mitigation of arsenic (Project 2); metals and uranium in groundwater and drinking water supply wells (Project 3); pilot studies investigating the efficacy of remediation strategies to prevent uranium loading into Chamokane Creek (Project 4); and creating a plan to prevent erosion and sediment/toxics loading into watersheds on the Reservation affected by recent wildfires (Project 5). This will help Spokane Tribal members, the community surrounding the Reservation, and downstream communities within the Spokane Arm of Lake Roosevelt and the Columbia River basin by reducing potential toxins that could harm human and/or environmental health at the source and downstream.

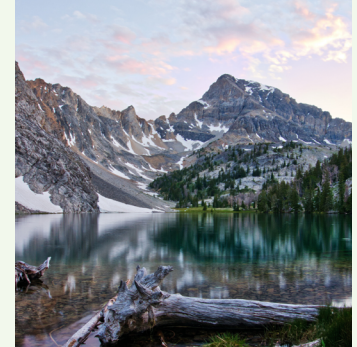
Federal Award Amount: \$2,000,000

6 Reclamation and Restoration of Ambush Rock

The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho will restore the re-acquired property at Ambush Rock for traditional, Treaty, and cultural use by Tribal citizens. The completed project will mitigate past environmental injustice to this culturally significant site and address environmental and social impacts resulting from previous industrial, governmental, and commercial decisions. Tribal citizens would like to use Ambush Rock to exercise their Treaty rights and for their traditional purposes and cultural ceremonies without fear of toxic exposure from the contaminated soils and metal debris that litters the property. The Kootenai Tribe would also like the remediated site put into trust and made part of the Kootenai Indian Reservation. The revitalization of Ambush Rock will help heal the land and assist with environmental recovery, prevent more contamination reaching the adjacent lands and river, reduce the human health risks associated with using this site for cultural and traditional uses, and mitigate for past industrial pollution. **Federal Award Amount: \$1,993,410**



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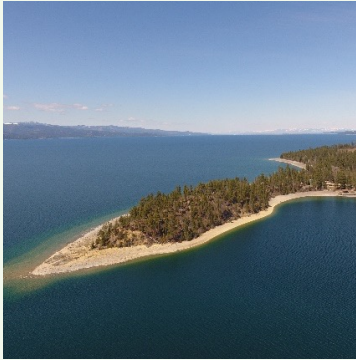


EPA'S COMMITMENT TO TRIBAL HEALTH PROTECTION, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

The Columbia River Basin Restoration Program is focused on engaging Tribal and underserved communities in efforts to identify and reduce threats to their environment and community health. EPA's commitment to reducing toxics in fish and water in the Columbia River Basin is key to EPA's ongoing trust responsibility to Tribal governments. Toxics reduction will support climate resilience for the Columbia River Basin ecosystem by reducing aquatic ecosystem and human health stressors in an environment stressed by a changing climate.



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ABOUT THE BASIN

The Columbia River Basin includes 17 federally recognized Tribes and covers 260,000 square miles, areas of MT, ID, WA, and OR and smaller portions of WY, NV, and UT. The Basin provides benefits including commercial fisheries, agriculture, forestry, recreation, and electric power generation. Human activities have contributed toxic contaminants to the environment that contribute to human health and ecosystem risks. Throughout the Basin, fish have accumulated contaminant levels that when eaten are harmful to people and wildlife. Toxics in fish are a primary health concern for Columbia River Basin Tribal people and other high fish consumers.

COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN RESTORATION PROGRAM VISION STATEMENT

The EPA Columbia River Basin Restoration Program, through the implementation of Clean Water Act Section 123, will be a catalyst for basin-wide toxics reduction work efforts, enabling communities to access unimpaired watersheds with healthy fish and wildlife and quantifiable toxics reductions in fish, wildlife, and water.

7 **Nez Perce Reservation Surface and Groundwater Pollutant Reduction Project**

The Nez Perce Tribe will use permanent and semi-permanent best management practices to reduce pesticides that infiltrate waterways in the Clearwater River watershed. Reducing pesticides in waterways benefits all living things that rely on the waters of the Columbia River Basin. Incentives for agricultural producers and Tribal landowners will encourage appropriate application and responsible disposal of pesticides. The outcomes of this project have the potential to help all communities on the reservation, including Tribal and non-Tribal community members alike. Reduced pesticide loads in waterways, and thus groundwater, will lessen the potential for inadvertent pesticide exposure in drinking water. The cleaner water may increase the survival rate of salmon species in Reservation tributaries and reduce the potential for bioaccumulation in fish tissue, and ultimately in Tribal members who consume an average of 75 pounds of salmon per year. The pesticide educational and drop-off events will also provide opportunities for responsible pesticide disposal for communities on the Reservation, a service not normally provided for these rural communities. **Federal Award Amount: \$1,960,754**

8 **Investigation and Risk Assessment of Residential Septic Systems Distribution on the Flathead Indian Reservation**

The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes will locate and map septic tanks and associated data on the Flathead Indian Reservation. Community education and outreach will educate homeowners about water quality and septic leachate issues on the Reservation. The Flathead Basin Commission has developed a model to identify septic systems using local government records and permits. Because of a lack of accurate records and permits of septic systems on the Reservation, outreach activities will be used to gather information on septic system locations and possible age of the systems. This information will help the development of future housing and support Tribal members in maintaining their systems and siting new systems that will result in the least amount of water quality impacts from toxic pollutants to the Reservation's waterways. Water on the reservation is a valuable resource to all Tribal members and improvements to septic system infrastructure will help maintain and improve water quality for all Tribal members and downstream water users.

Federal Award Amount: \$1,634,507

For more information, please contact Michelle Wilcox (USEPA Region 10) at (360) 753-9469 or wilcox.michelle@epa.gov or find us on the EPA website at <https://www.epa.gov/columbiariver>.



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“Since Time Immemorial, Yakama oral traditions teach us that the “choosh” (water) is the blood of our Mother, the Land. That in order for all things to grow healthy as the Creator had intended, especially our Sacred First Foods, choosh must be pure of any harmful effects for everything, including ourselves as human beings. The river clean-up moves in that direction of a healthy river for all living things.”

— **Davis Washines / Yellowash**

“Water resources on the Flathead Indian Reservation are believed to be vulnerable to impacts from poorly functioning on-site systems. The Columbia River Basin Grant will benefit the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes by establishing a permanent tracking and permit system that will help guide future residential development by assessing the risk to the tribes’ water resources due to a disproportionate amount of systems in sensitive areas.”

— **Chauncey Means, Water Quality Administrator, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes**

“We look forward to the challenges entailed in this project and strive for cleaner waters that will benefit all, both locally and downstream.”

— **Ryan Dunbeck, Nonpoint Source Program Coordinator, Nez Perce Tribe**

“The Tribe is committed to implement a toxics reduction program and strategy that will protect tribal sovereignty and subsistence, while also reducing potential contaminants entering downstream waters of the Columbia River Basin.”

— **Spokane Tribe**

“Water keeps all our bodies for us. Čúuš is a part of everything. It is within natítayt (the people), it is within tiičám (the land), and it is within núsux (the salmon). It is essential for the survival of all life. Cold, clean, healthy water is the life blood of the land. We drink water to remind us of who we are. Cúuš cleanses and heals our bodies.”

— **Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Water Code**

“We are pleased to partner with EPA to reduce toxic pollution. As long-time stewards of the land and water in the Willamette Valley, the Grand Ronde are committed to protecting and restoring clean water, salmon, and healthy communities.”

— **Cheryle A. Kennedy, Chairwoman, Grand Ronde Tribal Council**

“Since time immemorial, the Lyle Falls fishery on the Klickitat River has been an important traditional fishing ground for Indigenous People, which continues to this day through their descendants who are citizens of the Yakama Nation. Because of the natural rapids below the Falls, traditional fishing platforms are built on both sides of the narrow gorge to dipnet for salmon as the fish migrate up the river. The importance of the natural Lyle Falls fishery is further recognized by Yakama Nation citizens to be a special sacred area, to be cared for, protected and revered as a direct gift from the Creator.”

— **Davis Washines / Yellowash**