



U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10

August 2005

## Fish Sampling to Begin in September

In September, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will begin collecting fish from the Upper Columbia River to test them for contamination. This work is being done as part of EPA's Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) of the river and surrounding upland areas from the U.S./Canada border to the Grand Coulee Dam. The results will help EPA evaluate whether eating fish from the river poses a threat to people or wildlife.

Up to three boat crews will be on the lake collecting fish in September and October. We plan to collect about 1,000 fish, making the study the largest of its kind to take place on Lake Roosevelt. Species to be collected are walleye, rainbow trout, lake whitefish, largescale sucker, and burbot.

In 2006, EPA will analyze fish tissue for the following contaminants: heavy metals, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dioxins, and furans. The Agency will provide a summary of the sampling results and their potential impacts in a future fact sheet. We will also share the evaluation results in public meetings and post them on the EPA website.

### Phase I Sediment Sampling Completed

EPA successfully completed its phase I sediment sampling in April and May. About 400 sediment samples were collected from numerous locations along and within the river and reservoir. EPA will evaluate the sampling results in 2006. We will share the evaluation results in public meetings, publish them in a fact sheet, and post them on the EPA website.

### Open Houses Generate Lively Discussions

About 70 people attended three open houses this spring in Kettle Falls, Inchelium, and Davenport. At each meeting, EPA gave a short presentation about the Upper Columbia River. Attendees included private citizens, business owners, farmers, elected officials, and representatives from local governments. The question and answer sessions following the presentations were lively and informative. Many people expressed concern about possible health and environmental effects from the contamination. Others expressed concerns about impacts to businesses from negative publicity and cleanup activities.

These meetings are important because they help EPA understand your concerns so we can better address them early in the process. It is also an opportunity for EPA to let you know more about the work we are doing, and to provide an opportunity to answer your questions in person.

#### **Would you like an EPA project manager to talk with your civic group or association?**

EPA project managers are available to meet with local groups to talk about the project. For example, we've met with local realtors and a group of teachers to discuss their concerns. Let an EPA team member know if you would like a project manager to attend an upcoming meeting.

## Future Meetings Planned

EPA will continue to schedule public meetings throughout the project area during the RI/FS process. Because the project area extends from the U.S./Canada border to the Grand Coulee Dam, we plan to rotate the locations of the meetings so that as many people as possible will have an opportunity to attend.

## What's Ahead for 2006?

Funding has been requested from EPA Headquarters for the following tasks in 2006:

- To complete data evaluation from 2005 sediment and fish tissue sampling. Public meetings will be held at several locations to share the results.
- To continue development of a work plan for the human health and ecological risk assessments. The work plan is a roadmap for the risk assessment process, which will help determine whether there are negative impacts to people or the environment from the contamination.
- To conduct additional sampling activities, potentially including edible plants, pore water (the interstitial water between particles of sand and sediment at the bottom of the river), surface water, and additional sediment and fish tissue sampling.

## Project History

Past studies by federal and state agencies have shown high levels of hazardous waste contamination in Upper Columbia River sediments, including heavy metals such as cadmium, copper, lead, mercury and zinc, and other contaminants like dioxins and furans. In August 1999, the Colville Confederated Tribes petitioned EPA to conduct an assessment of environmental contamination in the Upper Columbia River. The petition expressed concerns about risks to people's health and the environment from contamination in the river.

In 2001, EPA collected samples of river sediment to learn more about the types and amounts of pollution that exist. The results showed that contamination was present in the lake and river sediments, and that a more detailed investigation was needed to evaluate possible risks to human health and the environment.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

**Q:** What is EPA's "trust responsibility" to Indian Tribes?

All federal agencies maintain a "trust responsibility" to Indian Tribes. This requires the federal government to consider the best interests of Tribes in decisions that affect them, and to protect the sovereignty of each Tribal government.

The EPA Policy for the Administration of Environmental Programs on Indian Reservations, and the White House Directive dated April 29, 1994 outline the principles intended to ensure that the federal government operates within a *government-to-government* relationship with federally recognized Tribes in a manner that respects Tribal sovereignty and the right to self-determination for Tribal governments in the U.S.

The federal trust responsibility reflects the unique legal and political relationship between the federal government and Indian Tribes that arises from treaties, laws, executive orders, and historical relations.

An important part of EPA's trust responsibility is government-to-government consultation about environmental issues. EPA works together with Tribes on important issues. Where differences exist, we strive to reach decisions that balance tribal interests and concerns with the responsibilities of the Agency.

*continued*

**Frequently Asked Questions:** *continued***Q: How does the Upper Columbia River project get funded?**

Like most federal agencies, EPA's budget is determined on an annual basis, beginning each February with the President's budget request. Congress holds hearings and gathers input from each agency throughout the summer and then marks up the President's proposal until agreement is reached. The goal is for every federal agency to have an approved operating budget by the start of the new fiscal year on October 1.

Budget planning for a multi-year project like the Upper Columbia River RI/FS is challenging. The Upper Columbia River site competes for funding each year along with other cleanup sites across the country. Each spring, EPA Regions submit their funding requests to Headquarters for tasks planned for the following year. It may be as late as December or January when the budget for a particular site is known. Since there is not enough money to meet all cleanup needs in a given year, planned activities and schedules must sometimes be revised.

*To read answers to other frequently asked questions, visit the EPA website*

**For More Information**

Information about this project is available at eight locations throughout the project area. Each repository has the same information, including copies of technical documents and fact sheets. Please call ahead for business hours.

<b>Northport:</b>	Northport Town Hall,	315 Summit St.	509-732-4450
<b>Colville:</b>	Colville Public Library,	195 S. Oak St.	509-684-6620
<b>Inchelium:</b>	Inchelium Tribal Resource Center,	12 Community Loop	509-634-2791
<b>Nespelem:</b>	Office of Environ. Trust, Colville Confed. Tribes, 1 Colville		509-634-2425
<b>Grand Coulee:</b>	Grand Coulee Library,	225 Federal St.	509-633-0972
<b>Wellpinit:</b>	Spokane Tribe Dept., Natural Resources	6290 B Ford-Wellpinit Road	509-258-9042
<b>Davenport:</b>	Davenport Library,	411 Morgan St.	509-725-4355
<b>Spokane:</b>	Spokane Library,	906 W. Main	509- 444-5334

**Visit the EPA Website**

To learn more about EPA's investigation of the Upper Columbia River, visit [www.epa.gov/r10earth](http://www.epa.gov/r10earth) (click on *Index A-Z*, then *U*, then *Upper Columbia River*).

**Or Contact**

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*For people with disabilities, please call Deborah Neal with requests for reasonable accommodation. TTY users, call 800-877-8339.*



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