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Lake Roosevelt Forum

NEWSletter

SPRING 2006

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EPA and Teck Cominco Reach Joint Agreement to Study Human and Ecologic Effects of Historic Sediment Contamination

THE U.S. EPA HAS REACHED AGREEMENT WITH TECK COMINCO to jointly conduct a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) to determine if contaminated sediments are adversely impacting human health or the environment in Lake Roosevelt.

Teck Cominco has operated a lead and smelter operation on the banks of the Columbia River in Trail, B.C. (ten miles north of the U.S. border) for one hundred years. Combined with other mining, smelting and pulp operations, discharges from these operations wrought a legacy of contaminated sediment that is at the bottom of Lake Roosevelt.

Michael Bogert, EPA's regional administrator in Seattle, characterized the agreement by saying "We've moved from opposite sides of the negotiating table to sit down as environmental problem-solvers."

EPA and Teck Cominco found themselves on opposite sides of the negotiating table when EPA issued a unilateral order in 2003 for Teck Cominco to fund all aspects of an RI/FS under U.S. law. Because the Trail operations reside in a sovereign country, Teck Cominco and Canada were unwilling to set a precedent of being under the jurisdiction of U.S. law for



*Historical photo of LeRoi Smelter,
Northport, Washington.*

environmental activities operating under permits from Canadian agencies.

As a result, EPA began an RI/FS with available federal funding in 2003. In 2004, the Colville Confederated Tribes and the State of Washington brought suit against Teck Cominco to try and force compliance with EPA's order. The suit was heard in the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in late 2005 and a decision is expected at any time.

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

The agreement will result in completion of

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GETTING TO KNOW DAVID MURILLO

American films and success stories often begin with working class families teaching their children the value of hard work and education at an early age. The culture of family and the heritage of a nation synthesize to show us the opportunities and accomplishments to which individuals can aspire.

David Murillo, the new Power Office Manager at Grand Coulee Dam, is a proud example of what America offers, family can support, and individuals can accomplish.

He grew up in Yakima, WA and, as he says “been picking fruit since the fifth grade.” Still fit, he played baseball through high school, pitching for his team in the American Legion World Series. He chose pipe fitting as his trade, joining the boilermaker apprentice program and union after high school.

Like all great stories, David had an itch to do something more. He turned his sights to mechanical engineering and graduated from Washington State University. The pipe fitter became an administrator, steadily taking on more difficult projects and management tasks. First for the Department of Defense, then the Department of Energy at Hanford and, for the past six years, the Bureau of Reclamation as manager for Reclamation’s Yakima Field Office.

With the retirement of Dave Lyngholm, Reclamation was looking for someone with unique skills to assume the role of Power Manager. Says Bill McDonald, Reclamation’s Regional Director, “Dave’s strong technical background, proven track record of problem-solving and project management, and leadership skills make him ideally suited to be the Power Manager.”

David sees his role at Grand Coulee as being a leader in helping Reclamation become more transparent in its decision-making process, working with stakeholders to



David Murillo is the new Power Office Manager at Grand Coulee Dam.

better understand the effects of possible project changes, and working with staff to find more efficiencies and productivity gains.

Reclamation, notes David, “wants to support changes in culture to meet the times and modern demands. We want to work smarter

and safer. I think the staff is up to and welcomes the challenge. So I’ll be working with supervisors and managers to track things and set new standards for accountability.”

David goes on to say “that the process of generating power and supporting a maintenance program that invests millions of dollars in things like turbine runner upgrades will continue. From the outside, the project and the functions we carry out will look the same.”

After three months on the job, David has noticed a few things. First, says David, “The size of the project and Lake Roosevelt really are big. You need to see it in person to really appreciate. Second, I really like the size and intimacy of the community. I’ve also learned that being a large employer in a small community means what we do within our offices affects and ripples through the whole community. That’s different than my experiences in the Tri-cities and Yakima.”

David’s wife, son and two daughters are making the most of their new living arrangements. They will be touring the lake in their newly purchased nineteen foot speed boat this summer. The former pitcher may be casting a reel for trout or rope for water skiing. “That’ll be new to me too,” says David.

So for those enjoying the lake this summer, you may see a determined man learning some new tricks with his family. That may be the Murillo’s, so give them a Lake Roosevelt welcome. ✱

Remodeled Grand Coulee Dam Visitor Center Now Open

“MANY VOICES, ONE RIVER” IS THE EXHIBIT THEME for the remodeled Grand Coulee Dam Visitor Center. After months of construction and years of planning, the visitor center was reopened at a May 5th opening ceremony. For the 400,000 visitors that come to the center each year, the exhibits mix a gee wiz feel with thought provoking insights that reflect the visitor center theme.

The exhibits capture the extraordinary story of Grand Coulee Dam: largest hydroelectric project in North America; gateway to over 600,000 acres of land being irrigated; source of thousands of jobs during the depression; and provider of flood control and recreation opportunities by enabling the creation of Lake Roosevelt.

Grand Coulee’s story also includes dramatic cultural and environmental shifts. With the building of Grand Coulee Dam, and then Chief Joseph Dam, salmon could no longer migrate to and from this area. The waters behind the dam rose 380 feet, inundating many tribal and non-tribal lands.

Exhibits also bring insight into the management of Grand Coulee Dam today, a balancing act which Steve Clark (a former Power Manager of Grand Coulee Dam) describes as, “... operating a multiple-purpose project in a world of special interests.”

Developers made a special effort to assure people of all physical capabilities could enjoy the center. This includes assistive listening equipment, wheel chair accessible exhibits, and larger handles for question and answer boards.

Says Craig Sprankle, who coordinated the project from the Grand Coulee Power Office, “We assembled a diverse group of people with knowledge and sensitivity to mobility, speech, vision and other types of disabilities. A requirement for the design and fabrication firm was to incorporate their ideas, which they did with great creativity.”

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The remodeled visitor center was warmly greeted by community members at the opening ceremony. Scott Hunter, former president of the Grand

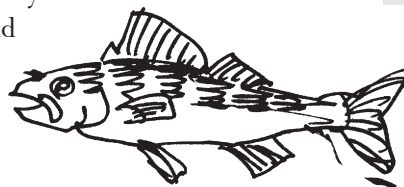


Examples of what you’ll find...

- A virtual tour of the dam by jet pack allows you to explore the inner workings of the dam, fly over the dam or go under water;
- A jackhammer whose operation enables you to feel the vibrations that construction workers coped with physically day after day;
- An interactive computer game lets you work with others to manage flood control, power and fishery needs;
- A deep sea diver’s outfit allows you to pose for a picture and lets you place your hands into the sleeves to understand the feeling of going underwater to work on the dam;
- Native American elders on video explain the cultural changes and challenges created by building of the dam;
- Musical notes on the wall enabling you to use a xylophone to play “Roll on Columbia,” the iconic song written by Woody Guthrie to describe efforts to harness the Columbia.

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Fishing Dates



DATE	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
June 24 - 25	Washington Governor’s Cup Walleye Tournament	Kettle Falls
August 5 - 6	Valley Marine Annual Open Bass Tournament	Banks Lake
August 19 - 20	Two Rivers Trout Derby	Two Rivers Casino
September 16 - 17	Two Rivers Walleye Championship	Two Rivers Casino
October 1	Fish Tag Prize Drawing	www.lrf.org for more details

Forum Conference has Record Attendance!!

OVER 250 PEOPLE attended one or more days of the Lake Roosevelt Forum's 2006 conference. Attendance was six percent higher than the very successful 2004 conference.

Entitled *Moving Forward*, the conference featured diverse sessions and presentations regarding water quality, fisheries and community development. The first two days of the conference featured two plenary sessions, 15 concurrent sessions and 75 individual presentations. Keynote luncheon speakers included Michael Bogert, U.S. EPA Region 10 Administrator, and Don Fast, Environment Canada's Regional Director.

Conference sessions and speakers provided unique opportunities for sharing and networking. Presentations provided attendees:

- Timely information about critical water quality, fishery and community development issues.
- Options for considering how to best balance needs for flood control, power, irrigation, healthy fisheries, cultural resources, and recreation.
- Opportunities to "connect the dots" between the many initiatives and people working diligently to meet the environmental, cultural and community development needs of the Lake Roosevelt area.

Topics included EPA updating attendees on the status of sediment contamination studies, the Washington Department of Ecology presenting on the Columbia River Water Management Program, area tribes and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife presenting on hatchery, sturgeon, fertilization and other fishery programs, the National Park Service leading a cultural resources preservation and protection discussion, and Canadian presentations on environmental assessment and fishery programs.

What I enjoyed most were the divergent and diverse perspectives absent the media hype.

The third day of the conference included work group meetings for the Upper Columbia White Sturgeon Recovery Team, the Lake Roosevelt Noxious Weed Collaborative and the Eastern Washington Council of Governments.

Those receiving this newsletter via postal mail are also receiving a CD with full conference proceedings, including all presentations and papers shared at the conference. Additional CDs can be obtained by contacting the Forum office.

Participants came from throughout the Columbia Basin, including Canada. They represented federal, state and local agencies; tribal members and representatives; elected officials; watershed councils; conservation groups and other associations; property owners; local businesses; and interested citizens.

A conference evaluation showed that about 50% of attendees were new when compared to the previous conference. This largely represents changes in agency/tribal personnel as well as additional and new participation from community members.

The next conference is currently being planned for November, 2007. So mark your calendars!!

The Forum also wants to say thank you again to our conference sponsors: Bonneville Power Administration, Washington Department of Ecology, Teck Cominco and the U.S. Environmental Protection Association. The conference is only made possible because of their financial support and encouragement. *



Don Fast, Environment Canada Region Director.

All sessions I attended were good, especially the panels.

Remodeled Visitor Center CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Coulee Chamber of Commerce, noted that Grand Coulee is the center piece for vital tourism dollars each summer. With a state-of-the-art visitor center, the experience for people all over the world will become that much better.

The Visitor Center was originally designed and built over 25 years ago as part of constructing the Third

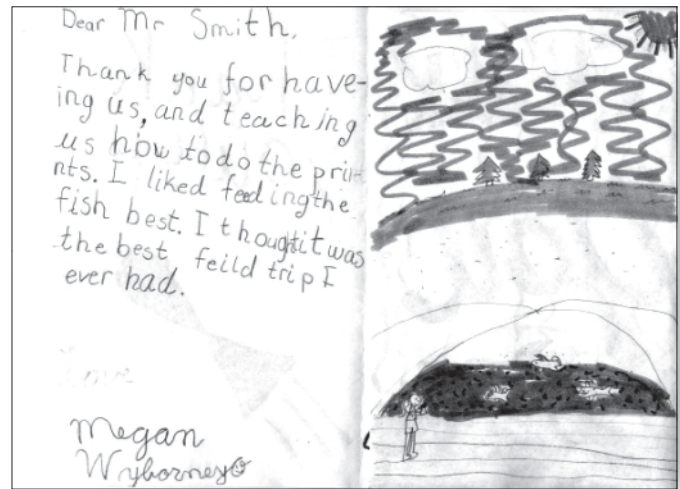
Powerplant. The renowned architect Marcel Breuer designed the center to resemble the circular shape of a generator rotor.

While the architecture is still the same, the exhibits provide an updated and very rich experience that will carry on for many years. *

School Busses Role to Support Student Discovery Week 2006

596 STUDENTS AND 64 TEACHERS AND PARENTS participated in Student Discovery Week this year. Students came from seventeen classes and nine schools throughout the Lake Roosevelt area.

Started by the Forum in 1999, Student Discovery Week quickly became a spring time tradition. Students and teachers celebrate the coming of longer days and warmer weather by visiting one of eight discovery zones. At each zone, natural resource specialists share their knowledge and introduce students to environmental projects and activities around the lake.



Each year, the Forum asks teachers and zone leaders to evaluate the program. With their input, the Forum will continue to make Student Discovery Week a great experience for everyone. *

EPA and Teck Cominco CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

an RI/FS while staying silent on the issue of whether U.S. environmental law can be used to seek remedies for pollution whose source point is a foreign country. In short, the agreement seeks to remedy environmental transboundary issues through collaboration rather than litigation. Key features of the agreement include:

- Teck Cominco carrying out an RI/FS under the supervision of EPA. This includes EPA reviewing and approving all work plans, contractors, and findings.
- Teck Cominco will put into escrow twenty million dollars to assure all RI/FS work is implemented.
- Teck Cominco will provide the Department of Interior six hundred thousand dollars per year and the Colville Tribes, Spokane Tribe and Washinton Department of Ecology will share five hundred thousand dollars per year to review plans, reports and otherwise participate in the RI/FS process.
- The study area will be focused on Lake Roosevelt, the two tribal reservations and lands bordering Lake Roosevelt that are managed by the National Park Service and Bureau of Reclamation.
- Based on the RI/FS, EPA will issue a record of decision regarding possible human and environmental risks, including potential needs for clean-up.

The underlying and innovative assumption in this agreement is that EPA will be able to effectively supervise Teck Cominco conducting an RI/FS of U.S. based contamination that largely originated from their Trail, Canada facility.

Assuming the answer is yes, the clear benefit to Lake Roosevelt is certainty that long lingering questions regarding human and environmental health will be fully addressed. Study work resulting from the RI/FS initiated by EPA in 2003 already had delays caused by funding availability. Further, EPA funding into the future was always a subject of speculation as Lake Roosevelt competed for available dollars with other EPA sites around the country.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

The biggest unanswered question relates to cleanup. If the RI/FS results in EPA recommending cleanup actions, what party(s) will be responsible for the cleanup? Current U.S. law is based on the principle of polluter pays. The agreement, however, is silent as to whether Teck Cominco is partially or completely liable for possible cleanup costs.

Also in question is the standing of the case currently being decided by the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Bogert's view is that the issue of enforcing EPA's order to conduct



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EPA Results Show Lake Roosevelt Beaches Safe for Recreation

Fifteen popular Lake Roosevelt beaches were tested to determine if contaminants (including arsenic, lead, pesticides and PCBs) were within health-based risk standards for recreational use.

Twelve beaches were within screening levels and three had levels slightly above for arsenic and/or lead. Based on the data, EPA concluded all fifteen "... beaches remain safe for seasonal recreation ...". Recreational use is defined as a family using a beach for camping for up to two weeks during summer vacation.

The three beaches (Black Sand, Northport and Dalles) with slightly elevated levels are in the northern reaches of the lake, which is consistent with previous findings of where contaminated sediment concentrations are highest. EPA held three public meetings the week of June 12th to review their findings.

For a fact sheet issued by EPA on these findings go to <http://yosemite.epa.gov/R10/CLEANUP.NSF/sites/UpperC>.

EPA & TECK COMINCO, CONT. FROM PAGE 5

an RI/FS is made mute by this agreement. Others believe, however, that the Court of Appeals could still rule on the issue, including if Teck Cominco can be held to natural resource damages and cleanup costs associated with findings of the RI/FS.

How long it will take to complete an RI/FS and issue a record of decision is still the subject of much speculation. Four to seven years, however, seems to be the most common estimate.

NEXT STEPS

Within 120 days of the agreement, EPA will be reviewing Teck Cominco submissions for personnel, contractors, and work plans. Included in these plans will be how current RI/FS studies and activities will be folded into the new RI/FS.

Results of beach sampling have just been released. EPA has also indicated they will complete analysis of fish tissue sampling that is scheduled for release in late summer.

For a copy of the agreement, go to: www.epa.gov/newsroom/pdf/teckcominco.pdf. *