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Lake Roosevelt Forum

NEWSletter

WINTER 2004

INside

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You are Invited to: Outlook 2004

LAKE ROOSEVELT'S ANNUAL CYCLE OF RAISING AND LOWERING WATER LEVELS to meet flood control needs is underway.

So if it's February, federal agencies (the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) are considering how far to draw the lake down this spring. Of course, Reclamation actually operates the project, but the Corps sets mandatory spring flood control elevations, Bonneville orders power production, and NOAA Fisheries looks out for endangered salmon and steelhead. All of these "uses" of the lake affect water levels.

Please join us at...

OUTLOOK 2004

TUESDAY, MARCH 16TH • 6:00 TO 7:30PM
LINCOLN COUNTY COURTHOUSE
450 LOGAN • DAVENPORT, WA

Take Highway 2 to Davenport. Turn north on 5th. Continue up hill to parking lot on west end of building. Come in through west entrance.

Representatives from the Bureau of Reclamation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, NOAA Fisheries and Bonneville Power Administration will forecast and discuss issues affecting this year's lake levels. Comments and questions from the public are encouraged.

Precipitation and snow pack are the two most important variables in determining how far to draw the lake down each year. Combined with how fast the snow pack is melting, drawdowns are done to protect cities as far south as Portland and Vancouver from flooding. As the chart (see page 4) shows, particularly wet years result in the highest draw downs. So far

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Getting To Know Mary Verner

In 1992 a woman stood in line to phone her office. Out of the corner of her eye she saw a small ad to be a natural resource planner for the Spokane Tribe of Indians, a place and culture about three thousand miles from where she was standing. She can't quite explain why she responded to the ad, much less accepted the position.

Mary Verner, however, is quite clear why she stayed. Says Mary, "It's a pleasure working with tribal members. There's an indigenous, moral imperative to what they do."

With the Spokane Tribe, Mary became Director of Natural Resources. During her ten years with the tribe, she played a front line role in bringing in resources and developing collaborative initiatives to address environmental needs.

The key ingredient to success, notes Mary, "is the persistence of people who do not give up." By example she points to Midnite Mine, an inactive uranium mine that operated from 1955 until 1981 on the Spokane Tribal Reservation. "Persistence," says Mary "got the mine listed as a superfund site; and persistence is resulting in the Department of Justice now considering assertive action against the mining company."

In late 2002, Mary was asked to take on a somewhat different role. Specifically, she became Executive Director of the Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUTs). The UCUTs is a non-profit organization that works on issues of common interest to the Spokane Tribe of Indians, the Colville Confederated Tribes, the Kalispell Tribe, the Kootenai Tribe and the Coeur d'Alene Tribe.

"I really want to be clear," comments Mary, "the leadership comes from the tribes, and the work on the ground is done by the tribes. I serve by helping move the process along."

Most recently, the UCUTs filed suit against the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) in the Ninth Circuit. The tribes contend that BPA has not properly balanced cuts to their fish and wildlife program with the power benefits they are providing their customers. Says Mary, "The tribes are carrying the fight. But in truth all communities will benefit from appropriate levels of fish and wildlife funding being restored."

Mary Verner is dedicated to protecting the environment.

Mary notes that BPA funding has been instrumental in allowing tribes, in partnership with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and others, to protect numerous species and mitigate the effects of past practices. This has been done by doing things like acquiring lands to protect wildlife, rehabilitating habitat, and protecting native fisheries.

From the perspective of the UCUTs, they should not be placed in the position of being asked how to make do with less. Their obligation centers on how to best meet their jurisdictional and moral commitment to environmental justice.

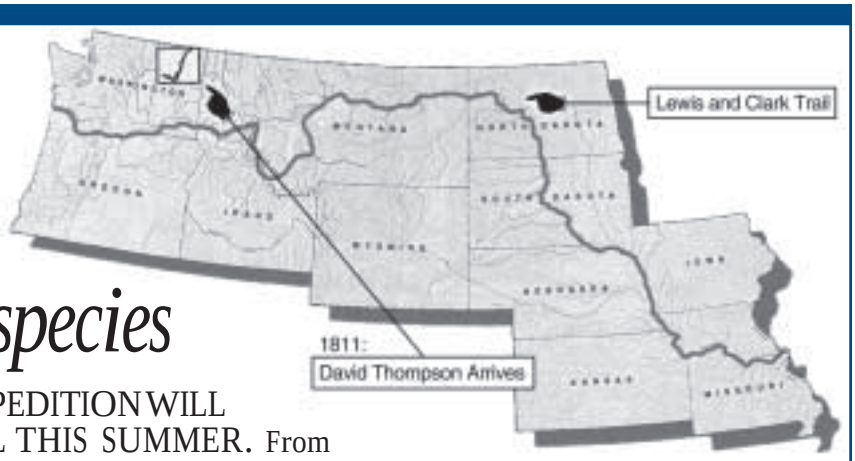
Mary thinks Lake Roosevelt is a good example of persistence and collaboration having big pay offs. "It seems like a kind of critical mass formed in the 1980s. People stopped playing games and got down to business. For the environment and communities, there's been so much revitalization." Mary also notes that collaboration and outreach is also resulting in better public awareness of who the tribes are and what contemporary tribal culture has to offer. "We've come a long way, and we know there is still a long way to go."

And for Mary, being an advocate for the environment is not so much a choice as a calling. Or what she calls her "involuntary belief system." "Even as a child I was more interested in earth worms than Barbie dolls."

Her passion is also backed up by education. She has a master's degree in environmental management. And while Mary worked for the Spokane Tribe, she earned a law degree from Gonzaga University.

Along the way, Mary also found time to be a mother. She has a twenty three year old daughter, a six year old son and a grand daughter. One of her fondest hopes is that they pursue their life's passions as fervently as she has pursued hers. That, of course, would make the world a little better place for all of us. ✲

Lewis and Clark Celebration Coming to the Northwest… and so may invasive species



THE HISTORIC LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION WILL BE CELEBRATING ITS BICENTENNIAL THIS SUMMER. From St. Louis, Missouri to Astoria, Oregon celebratory events and festivals are likely to bring thousands of additional tourists to the Northwest.

In our area, contact with European-American cultures also began in the early 1800s. It was not until 1811, however, that the most well known early explorer, David Thompson, arrived in Kettle Falls. He came during the salmon fishing season of 1811, and writes of tribal members with their "big woven baskets at the bottom of the (Kettle) falls … capturing fish." His diaries talk of well constructed houses and he describes the village area as "a kind of general rendezvous for news, trade, and settling disputes, in which these villagers acted as arbitrators, never joining any war party."

A year before Thompson, two men built a small trading post in 1810 at the confluence of the Spokane and Little Spokane Rivers. It was a small, crude cabin which they named Spokane House. This was the first permanent white settlement in what would become the state of Washington.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Even though the Lewis and Clark trail and events occur south of here, its likely many travelers will choose to explore the upper Columbia as well. Many will be traveling by car, trailing boats and carrying all manner of camping gear.

While this may portend particularly good economic times for merchants, natural resource managers are particularly concerned with invasive species (both plant and animal) being introduced. Such species are nonnative (meaning they are not from this area). Once they grab a foothold, they can often out-compete, prey upon or bring diseases or parasites to economically and ecologically valuable native species. The result can be unwanted threats and changes to the ecosystem.

Invasive species commonly arrive via the hulls or engine compartments of boats, packing materials, trailers, tents and cloths.

EURASIAN WATER MILFOIL

Of well known local concern is Eurasian Water Milfoil. This submerged aquatic plant can quickly form thick mats that inhibit swimming, become entangled in boat propellers, and displace native plants. Eurasian Water Milfoil likes to live in lakes, ponds, shallow water reservoirs and slow moving rivers and streams.

All that is required for spreading is for a small piece to break off and travel downstream, or cling to a boat, trailer or fishing gear that is then used in another

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Easy ways we can all help to protect Washington from Aquatic Native Species:

Boaters: Carefully inspect your boat, motor and trailer after you take the boat out of the water and before you put it back in the water. Put any plants or animals found on your boat or trailer in the trash and empty the baitwell on shore. Drain lake or river water from livewell and bilge. Wash down your boat, trailer and tackle with hot water when you get home to kill off any hitchikers that could be transported into other lakes.

Fishers: If you use bait that is not native to Washington, put the bait and its packaging into the trash when you are done fishing instead of releasing it into the water.

Report: New sightings should be reported with exact location and description. WDFW can be contacted at (360) 902-2700, and Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area at (509) 633-9441.

Educators and researchers: Take precautions to keep non-indigenous species contained or quarantined and dispose of them properly. A permit should be requested from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife before any non-native animal is brought into the state.

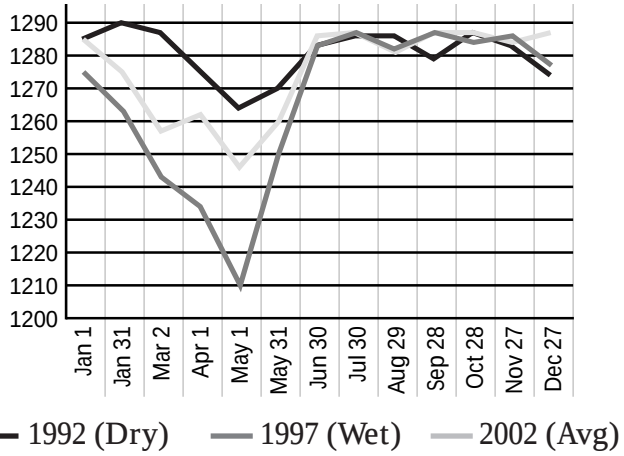
From: Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Other Sources

By The Numbers:
Storage and Operating Capacity of Lake Roosevelt

Lake Roosevelt water levels can fluctuate more than 80 feet annually. At its maximum, the lake's elevation can rise to 1,290 feet above sea level and can hold over 9,000,000 acre-feet of water. That's enough water to cover the states of Washington and Oregon with more than one inch of water. The minimum lake level for normal operations is 1,208 feet above sea level. So if you can imagine raising and lowering water within an eight story building that's one half to one mile wide and over one hundred miles long, that's the "box" within which Lake Roosevelt operations are managed. Part of the importance of Lake Roosevelt is also its ability to refill. The run-off from rivers and tributaries into the lake allows it to refill about seven times in an average water year. By comparison, one of the other large reservoirs in the region, Hungry Horse, could not refill in the same year if it were emptied. ✲

TO CHECK DAILY LAKE LEVELS,
visit www.lrf.org.
Click on "Lake Levels."
Or call 1-800-824-4916.

LAKE ROOSEVELT WATER ELEVATIONS
Wet - Dry - Average Water Years



Invasive Species CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

body of water. Once introduced, it is nearly impossible to eradicate.

Lake Roosevelt's annual draw downs actually help keep the spread of milfoil at bay. Such draw downs expose the roots, causing them to dry out or freeze.

One exception may be porcupine bay and other areas along the Spokane river reach. Says Keith Green, who has a cabin near porcupine bay, "There are fields of milfoil growing in the general public swimming area and where the boaters camp. It's particularly evident in the late summer with the drawdowns."

The National Park Service expects to investigate and consider removal strategies this year. The suspicion is that milfoil is floating downstream from Long Lake and/or being introduced by boaters. Because the Spokane arm waters are more still and shallow than the main stem, the danger of milfoil growth is much higher.

ZEBRA MUSSEL

Another aquatic invasive species of particular concern is the zebra mussel (Dreissena polymorpha). The zebra mussel has caused extensive economic and ecological damage since arriving in the Great Lakes, and is rapidly spreading throughout North America.

As reported by WDFW, they are "Native to the Black and Caspian Seas, they were first discovered in the Great lakes in 1988. A related species, the quagga mussel was found in 1991. By the year 2000, the mussel was infesting most stretches of nine major rivers and their tributaries. It is established in hundreds of lakes in at least 20 states and 2 Canadian Provinces.

Because the mussels can live out of water for nearly a month if they are not subjected to heat or extreme drying conditions, the possibility of them being transported to Washington via boat is very real. WDFW has initiated volunteer monitoring programs in several lakes and along the Columbia and Snake Rivers, and requires that out of state participants in fishing contests undergo boat inspections." ✲

MORE INFORMATION
For more information about aquatic nuisance species, visit http://wdfw.wa.gov/fish/ans/wa_speciesofconcern.htm.

Public Comments on Total Dissolved Gas TMDL Standard and Personal Water Craft Use Sought

PWC

PERSONAL WATER CRAFT (PWC)

What: The National Park Service is seeking comment on a proposed rule that will regulate the future use of Personal Water Craft (PWC) on Lake Roosevelt. PWC use has been closed on Lake Roosevelt since November 7, 2002. The proposed rule for future PWC use is based on the preferred alternative identified in an Environmental Assessment that was published April 29, 2003.

Public Comment: The public comment period for the proposed PWC rule will close April 6, 2004. Comments may be sent via email to laro@den.nps.gov. Or submitted by mail or hand delivery to: Superintendent, Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, 1008 Crest Drive, Coulee Dam, WA 99116.

More Information: The proposed rule can be viewed via the Internet at www.nps.gov/laro/home.htm. If you can not access this website, you can contact the Forum for a copy.

For additional background information on this topic, view our Fall 2003, Spring 2003 and Fall 2002 newsletters on our website at http://www.lrf.org/Newsletters.html.

TDG

TOTAL DISSOLVED GAS TMDL STANDARD

What: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is seeking public comment on a proposed TDG Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) being developed by EPA and the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology). A TMDL for total dissolved gas (TDG) is necessary because high concentrations of TDG negatively impact the health and survival of fish and other aquatic life. EPA is proposing to issue a TDG TMDL for State and Tribal waters in the Columbia River above Grand Coulee Dam, including Lake Roosevelt.

Public Comment: Written comments on the proposed TDG TMDL must be received by 5 p.m. on March 18, 2004. Comments may be sent by email to rueda.helen@epa.gov, or submitted by mail to Helen Rueda, U.S. EPA 811 SW 6th Avenue, Portland, OR 97204.

Public meetings and presentations will also be held. March 10, 2004, 6:30 PM, Eastern WA University Spokane Campus, 705 W. 1st Ave., corner of 1st & Wall, RM 432 Spokane. March 11, 2004, 6:30 PM, Chelan County, Auditorium, 400 Douglas, corner of Washington & Douglas, Wenatchee.

More Information: The proposed TMDL can be viewed via the Internet at www.ecy.wa.gov/biblio/0403002/html, or by calling the Department of Ecology at (360) 407-6480.

To learn about TDG and the setting of a TMDL for Lake Roosevelt, visit our web site slide show at http://www.lrf.org/TMDLss2.

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this year, the drainage area above Grand Coulee is experiencing a normal water year and the flood control elevation set for Lake Roosevelt for the end of April is 1,237.3 feet above sea level.

The amount and rate of drawdowns has ecological effects. From water quality to entrainment (fish being swept through the turbines at Grand Coulee Dam), fish and other species rely on managers considering such effects

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email: info@lrf.org

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when making operational decisions.

A management group of particular importance is the Technical Management Team (TMT), an inter-agency technical group responsible for making recommendations on dam and reservoir operations along the Columbia. The TMT web site (http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil/TMT/index.html) is one of the best resources available for operational, water supply, fish passage and related plans. Representatives of this group will present information and answer questions at the March 16th Outlook 2004 operations meeting in Davenport (see invitation on cover).

By July 4th (and usually by mid June), managers are committed to refilling Lake Roosevelt to an elevation of 1,280 feet or above. This enables operators to also meet the needs of the nearly two million visitors who swim, boat and fish on Lake Roosevelt each year.

By late August and into the fall, lake levels can again vary somewhat to meet downstream as well as resident fishery needs. This includes trying to maintain lake levels between 1,283 and 1,285 feet during October to assist Lake Roosevelt's kokanee fishery. ✲

Get On The List

THE LAKE ROOSEVELT FORUM NEWSLETTER is a free publication. If you'd like to be added to our quarterly mailing list, please call us toll-free at 1-800-279-6375 or write us at the address listed above. Be sure to spell out your name and street address. Don't forget to include your zip code.

Feedback

1-800-279-6375 OR EMAIL: info@lrf.org Please share your questions and comments with us. Let us know what you'd like more information about or would like to see featured in future issues. We will provide you with a response or additional information.