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Lake Roosevelt Forum

NEWSletter

WINTER 2006

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Lake Operations 2006

And Actions That May Affect Future Operations

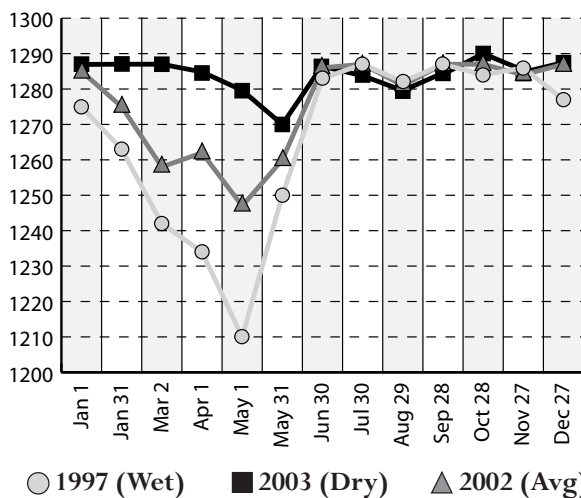
SO FAR, 2006 HAS BEEN A YEAR OF UNSEASONABLY WARM TEMPERATURES in the low lying areas, but excellent snow pack in the mountains. The February 7th Final Water Supply Forecast showed the area above Grand Coulee projected at one hundred percent of average, while the Columbia River as a whole stood at one hundred three percent.

So while most people are seeing little to no snow in their front yard, lake elevations at Lake Roosevelt are following those of a fairly "wet" year. In a wet year, the lake sees a higher than average draw down in the spring. This is to prevent downstream flooding of cities such as Portland.

2006 LAKE LEVEL FORECAST

For the first six weeks of the year, lake levels went from 1288 feet above sea level to 1273 feet. To meet this year's flood control target, the lake will be lowered to about 1225 feet by the end of April. This forecast is according to the February forecast and could change with later forecasts.

LAKE ROOSEVELT WATER ELEVATIONS
Wet - Dry - Average Water Years



The lake level is expected to refill to 1280 feet or above by July 1. Historically, this level is most often reached in mid-June.

By the end of August, the lake level will drop to 1280 feet as called for in the Biological Opinion issued by the NOAA Fisheries. This is done to provide more flows for endangered salmon during average or above average water years. During below average water years, the opinion calls for the lake to be lowered an additional two feet to elevation 1278 feet.

When the lake is lowered to 1278' in mid-August, those who live and recreate in the lower Spokane arm report a much higher incidence of Eurasian

GETTING TO KNOW JOE BRISBOIS

By George Hill, Spokane Tribal Culture Office

“The River used to take care of itself. But now with all the dams built across it, we have got to take care of it.”

Yesterday I was visiting with one of our Spokane Tribal Elders as he was feeding rainbow trout in a net pen at Two Rivers Marina. His name is Joe Brisbois. The quote you just read was what he told me while he was feeding the fish. That quote was so powerful.

To our people, and many others, the Spokane River and the Columbia River are living entities that have sustained us for centuries. As go the rivers, so go our people.

Joe Brisbois is an amazing man at 84 years young. His family has been a part of these two rivers for eternity. They have lived, played, loved, and died by these two rivers. Joe has seen the two rivers moving through our lives like young, vibrant, and free spirits. He’s seen them become slower, docile, and old. On very windy days, though, you can still catch a glimpse of the river’s powerful spirit below the surface of Lake Roosevelt.

Joe is a decorated combat veteran of WWII. He was the flight engineer on a B-25 Bomber, with the designation of “9-D,” and the top turret gunner. As a member of that aircrew, he flew 85 missions over Europe.

Joe still remembers the old “Nee” bridge down at the confluence of the two rivers (now the Spokane River and Lake Roosevelt). The bridge consisted of a framework supporting two sets of planks running parallel across it. The planks formed two tracks the width of automobile tires. Needless to say it was one-way traffic. People on horseback had to ride their horses across on one set of



Joe Brisbois Helps Out at Two Rivers Marina Net Pens.

planks or the other. The bridge was named after the Nee family that used to operate a ferry at the site before the county/state built the bridge.

Joe said that recreation wasn’t part of the thinking for the reservoir when the dam was built. It was built for power, irrigation, and flood control.

Recreation wasn’t part of the reservoir until after WWII. That was when people began to discover the recreational treasure that existed. It started with fishing and has grown to the immense recreational use that you now see.

Joe sees the recreation as a plus for the region. Although some boaters have little respect for the river by dumping their trash into it, most are mindful of their impact and try to minimize their impact. Joe said the attitude of dumping trash into the river goes back to when wooden ramps were built in the city of Spokane for the purpose of dumping trash into the water. This practice has stopped, but the prevailing attitude that created it still exists for some people.

Joe sees recreational use as having minimal impact on cultural resources, but that situation could change as recreational use increases. This will require more vigilance.



Learn more about preserving cultural resources in Lake Roosevelt at the Forum Conference!!! A session is scheduled Monday, April 17 at 3pm.

The logo for the Lake Roosevelt Forum Annual Conference 2006 features a circular design with silhouettes of birds in flight. The text "Lake Roosevelt Forum Annual Conference" is arched over the top, "2006" is on the right, and "MOVING FORWARD" is in a box at the bottom.

Creating the reservoir and recreational opportunities has impacted our culture by changing how some things are named. For instance, Joe was talking with a National Park Service (NPS) employee and said they were standing by Hell’s Gate. The NPS person told him that it was now called by a different name by people using the reservoir. And a few years back, Joe remembers a group

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Environmental Report Shows Columbia River Improving in Canada

By CRIEMP Staff

THE 2005 ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS REPORT released by the Columbia River Integrated Environmental Monitoring Program (CRIEMP) shows that the environmental outlook for the Canadian portion of the Columbia River is much better than it was a decade ago. The positive trend is expected to continue in years to come.

"We've compiled over ten years of monitoring data and found that changes and improvements in industry practices along the river have made a big difference to river health and ongoing monitoring programs allow us to track this and to promote continual improvement," says Bill Duncan, CRIEMP spokesperson and environmental biologist for Teck Cominco, Ltd, one of several industry partners to join CRIEMP in ongoing monitoring and research efforts.

CRIEMP monitors 60 kilometres (37 miles) of the Columbia from the Arrow Reservoir near Castlegar, British Columbia to the Canada-US border, referred to in Canada as the Lower Columbia River. This stretch of river is influenced by numerous human activities. Hugh

Keenleyside, Brilliant, and Waneta dams, and industrial operations including a saw mill (Pope and Talbot), pulp mill (Zellstoff Celgar) and lead/zinc smelter (Teck Cominco) operate along its banks.

Two major tributaries with their own environmental impacts - the Kootenay and Pend d'Oreille rivers - flow into the Columbia. The B.C. communities of Castlegar and Trail discharge treated municipal wastewater into this section of the river. Added to this, more people are building riverside homes and want to boat, fish, and recreate on the river.

CRIEMP's monitoring and reporting role has become a crucial component toward



Jolene Raggett, Environmental Impact Assessment Biologist for the BC Ministry of Environment, a CRIEMP partner.

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THE DAVENPORT HOTEL

SPOKANE, WA

APRIL 17 - 19

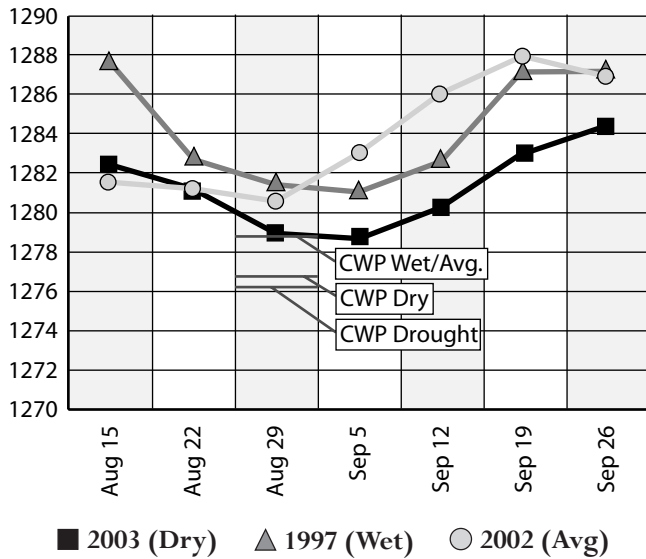
SAMPLE TOPICS

Fisheries: Health and productivity of kokanee, trout, white sturgeon and other fisheries; Species Management; Net Pens; Hatcheries **Water Quality:** Sediment Contamination; Water Temperature; Total Dissolved Gas **Watersheds:** Subbasin Planning, WRIA Activities **Planning:** GIS Systems, Weed Control; Land Use; Recreation; Economic Development **Operations:** Lake Elevations, Flood Control, Power Generation, Fishery Needs

Visit www.lrf.org/conf/ for registration and more information.

Lake Operations CONT. FROM PAGE 1

THE COLUMBIA WATER PARTNERSHIP EFFECT ON LAKE ROOSEVELT WATER LEVELS



watermilfoil and pond weed. Infestation is heaviest in shallow water areas with ample sunlight.

The National Park Service is working with Lincoln County, homeowners and the Spokane Tribe on aquatic weed control. Winter lake draw downs for flood control help contain aquatic weeds by exposing beach areas.

By the end of September, look for the lake to rise to 1283 feet or above. This is done to assist Lake Roosevelt's fall-spawning Kokanee.

From year to year, the variables effecting lake levels and water flow for Lake Roosevelt are fairly consistent. It works like this:

Spring: The water level is drawn down to meet flood control needs (anywhere between elevations 1290 and 1208), which is part of the congressional legislation authorizing operation of Grand Coulee Dam.

Summer: The water level is raised to between 1280 and 1290 feet to meet the interests of thousands of recreationists and to store water for later use during the fall when stream flows are naturally low. By the end of summer, the level drops to either 1280 or 1278 as called for in the Biological Opinion.

Fall: The water level is raised to 1283 feet or higher to assist resident Kokanee, although no legislation or regulation requires this action.

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE: THE BIOLOGIC OPINION AND COLUMBIA WATER PARTNERSHIP

The Biological Opinion for the Federal Columbia River Power System and the Columbia Water Partnership sponsored by the State of Washington may create additional changes in lake levels, particularly during the summer.

The Columbia River Biological Opinion was developed by NOAA Fisheries to assure that fish listed under the Endangered Species Act are on the road to recovery. The 2004 Opinion was remanded (sent back to NOAA fisheries to rewrite) by Judge Redden because of deficiencies. NOAA Fisheries is currently working with federal agencies, states, tribes and other stakeholders to rework this biological opinion. The results may or may not further affect lake water levels.

The Columbia Water Partnership (CWP) is an effort by the State of Washington to work with stakeholders to relieve Columbia River water allocation issues. At the heart of this initiative is augmenting, or making stable, water resources for farmers, municipalities and ESA listed fisheries. This would largely be done through a combination of conservation, creating additional off-stream storage and requesting increased water from existing storage projects in the U.S. and Canada. Until these measures can be accomplished, the State is requesting additional water be taken out of Lake Roosevelt. The Columbia Water Partnership Graphic shows the possible effects on Lake Roosevelt's water levels at the end of August for a wet, average, and dry water year.

In a bold move, Washington State House Bill 2860 provides foundational pieces to support the CWP. The bill, signed by Governor Gregoire in mid-February, steers 210 million dollars into research, conservation and water

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Learn more about the possible effects of the Biological Opinion and the Columbia Water Partnership at several conference sessions.

Visit www.lrf.org/conf/ for more details.


Environmental Report CONT. FROM PAGE 3

understanding the resulting environmental impacts toward lessening those impacts and rejuvenating the aquatic environment.

Key findings of the 2005 report include improved survival of benthic invertebrates (bugs eaten by fish), reduced levels of entrained gases related to dam spilling that can be harmful to fish, stability among most recreational fish populations, and lower levels of contaminants in sediments. Using a national ranking system, CRIEMP reports that water quality has improved from “poor - marginal” to “good” at Waneta, 2 kilometres (1.3 miles) north of the Canada-US border and remains “good - excellent” at Birchbank, 23 kilometres (14.3 miles) north of the border. This means that the river is safe for recreation and aquatic life and that water from this river reach, like water from all surface sources, is safe to drink once it has undergone general surface treatment.

CRIEMP reports that the outlook for white sturgeon in the Columbia River remains uncertain and their survival will depend upon the success of the separate but related Upper Columbia White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative to address the lack of reproductive success. Many CRIEMP members and U.S. organizations are involved in the initiative to recover sturgeon populations in the river. To learn more, visit www.uppercolumbiasturgeon.org.

CRIEMP plans to widen its monitoring to include other contaminants, such as organic compounds from pesticide applications or long range transport from other areas, and pharmaceutical compounds that can make their way into river systems through municipal wastewater discharges. “We still have challenges ahead of us, and we plan to continue working through CRIEMP and with all our partners to collect monitoring data and report on the state of the river. We can’t let up now that we’re seeing river health



Visit and learn more about CRIEMP initiatives and stakeholders at the Lake Roosevelt Forum Conference this April!!!! Their session is Tuesday, April 18 at 11am.

improve,” says Duncan. “We need to educate the B.C. public about impacts from use of pesticides and herbicides, removal of bank vegetation, and other watershed activities that affect the river and its tributaries.”

Key industrial and government partners funded detailed studies from 1991-93, which were developed and approved by all CRIEMP members including regulatory agencies. These studies were essential to establishing a baseline to measure the effectiveness of significant industrial improvements planned or underway in the 1990s.

CRIEMP WAS FORMED BY *key stakeholders from government and industry in 1991 to assess the status of ecological health of the Canadian portion of the Columbia River between Hugh Keenleyside Dam and the Canada – U.S. border. The primary objective of CRIEMP is to gather and share environmental information with the public, agencies, and industries in a coordinated and cost-effective manner. Partners now include all levels of government, local industry, First Nations, and non-government organizations from Canada and the US.*

For the full 2005 Environmental Status Report and more information about CRIEMP, visit www.criemp.org. ✨

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storage projects along the Columbia and Snake rivers. Some prospective sites are in the Lake Roosevelt area.

CHECK DAILY LAKE LEVELS

To check daily lake levels, visit www.lrf.org and click on “Lake Levels,” or call 1-800-824-4916.

Any change in the water level of Lake Roosevelt has the potential to affect many things: cultural resources, resident fisheries, recreation, water quality, power generation, flood control, and irrigation to name a few. The Forum urges all stakeholders to stay informed about proposed lake level changes. The interests of communities throughout the area may be affected. ✨

Lake Roosevelt Forum

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Getting to Know CONT. FROM PAGE 2

of New York City youths who built an outhouse on the bank of the reservoir. This was the only structure in the area, so it became “Shithouse Flats.” Other areas have taken on new names for similar reasons, creating a cultural loss with our heritage.

Joe was more concerned about the wind erosion impacts on cultural resources. The creation of the reservoir removed vegetation from the original banks, exposing them to the wind when the reservoir level is dropped.

As a young man Joe, along with his brother Dan, worked on the Grand Coulee Dam before WWII. He is familiar with the original portion of the dam because he worked on it, but he would like to tour the newer parts added on after that.

Joe has fished the Spokane and Columbia Rivers all his life. He remembers the old salmon runs. His love of the two rivers is demonstrated in his volunteer work with the fisheries. He believes in his quote and his life demonstrates it. He is doing what he can for old family friends, the two rivers, by helping take care of them.

If you are around the Two Rivers Marina or Casino you will more than likely see him. If you do, say “Hi” and thank him for what he has done for his two rivers and his country. In fact he is still doing it.

Perhaps the secret to his longevity is what he told me while we visited in the Two River’s Casino restaurant, “Cocoa and whiskey are good for the heart. They don’t serve whiskey here, so I drink cocoa.”

I thank Joe for his time. It never ceases to amaze me that every time I visit with him I learn something new. ✨

Get On The List

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