

Committed to the environmental and economic well being of our community

Lake Roosevelt Forum

NEWSletter

SUMMER 2024

- Kids Having Fun, Learning..... 2
- Ecology Northport Waterfront Cleanup..... 3
- Midnite Mine Superfund Cleanup Progress 3
- EPA Planning Additional Northport Cleanup 3
- Salmon Reintroduction Takes Shape..... 5
- 2024 Paddle to Sxwnitkw..... 5
- Upper Columbia United Tribes Receive Upper Columbia Basin Toxics Reduction Funding 6
- Spokane Tribe Upper Columbia Basin Contaminant Study Update..... 6
- Lake Roosevelt Agency Updates..... 6
- EPA Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) Update..... 7
- EPA Proposes Adding the Upper Columbia River to the National Priorities List..... 7
- Upper Columbia River Meeting..... 7
- Tick Tock, Columbia River Treaty Clock Nears Midnight... 8

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- Bureau of Indian Affairs
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- Ferry County
- Lincoln County
- National Park Service
- Spokane Tribe of Indians
- Stevens County
- Teck American
- Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife

2024 Lake Roosevelt Fishery Highlights



Spokane Tribal Hatchery manager Tim Peone and Tanya go fishing

Year after year, Lake Roosevelt continues to provide extraordinary and diverse angling opportunities that attract enthusiasts from near and far. Each year, thousands of hours of angling time are happily spent catching over 150,000 fish. Rainbow trout, kokanee, white sturgeon, walleye and smallmouth bass are the most targeted species.

Also, the fight to suppress northern pike, a voracious predator that devastates other fish populations, provides additional angling opportunities.

Co-managers from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the Spokane Tribe of Indians, and Colville Confederated Tribes summarized highlights for our readers. Annually, they invest over \$9 million dollars to develop and maintain the fishery.

RAINBOW TROUT AND NET PENS

The long-term goal is to annually release up to 750,000 with higher release numbers corresponding to higher angler success rates. Rainbow trout were released into Lake Roosevelt in May. They ranged from 7 to 13 inches in length and 1 to 7 fish to the pound. Many will grow to about 16-18 inches by September with many being available in the system for 2 angling seasons.

All rainbows released are triploids, meaning they are sterile and will not interbreed with wild trout. In addition, their adipose fin is clipped. Wild fish with an intact adipose fin should be released to assure only keeping hatchery fish in Lake Roosevelt.

The goal is for a 5% annual return to creel, the estimated amount caught by anglers based on survey data collected by co-managers. Anglers had an estimated return of 7.2% in 2023.

Continued on Page 4

Kids Having Fun, Learning



Visiting Spokane Tribal Hatchery

Spring is a busy time for area students to go outside to learn about nature, fish and wildlife, history and culture that makes our area unique. Some highlights:

STUDENT DISCOVERY DAYS

Students enjoyed hands-on, minds-on field trips to the Spokane Tribal Hatchery, Grand Coulee Dam, Lake Roosevelt Net Pens, Spokane House and the Ford Fish Hatchery.

FISH FEST

With a National Park Foundation Junior Angler grant, the National Park Service hosted the second annual Fish Fest. Located at Fort Spokane this year, 125 fishing poles were given out to children under 14 to try their luck at angling. With a little instruction and encouragement, they were hooked and then sworn in as Junior Anglers. The Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Reclamation and National Parks Service provided additional learning opportunities for kids and adults with information booths. 🌲



Fur Trade Festival

FUR TRADE FESTIVAL

The National Park Service with volunteers from the Northwest Fur Trade Historians and support from Washington State Parks, Kettle Falls Historical Center and the Lake Roosevelt Forum, hosted another successful Fur Trade Festival in May. Over 2 days, 150 students plus adults from 7 schools rotated through presentation stations to learn about fur trade and what life looked like in this area more than 150 years ago! On Saturday, 228 community members and families enjoyed historical reenactments and other activities.



Fish Fest

Ecology Northport Waterfront Cleanup

[Click here](#) to visit Ecology's picture album of waterfront cleanup activities. The graphic shows the five areas designated for cleanup to relieve elevated levels of arsenic, copper, lead, and zinc in soil and sediment considered to be a risk to human health and the environment.

Ecology reports that due to this spring's river conditions, they were not able to conduct work in all five cleanup areas. Significant progress, however, was made on the seasonal beach and all hillside cleanup and capping work is complete. The work will stop for 2024 in July or August, then pick back up in spring 2025.

Access to the boat launch and park is open and will continue to be through the length of the project via the access road to the east of the closure. 🗺️



Cleanup at Northport waterfront

EPA Planning Additional Northport Cleanup

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 10 is planning to conduct a time-critical removal/soil cleanup action for approximately 15 properties in summer/fall 2024.

Currently, EPA is reviewing existing soil sampling data to identify properties with concentrations in soil above the removal action level of 200 mg/kg lead and/or 90 mg/kg arsenic where children and/or women of childbearing age have unrestricted access to lead contaminated soil. This includes, but is not limited to, properties containing single- and multi-family dwellings, apartment complexes, vacant lots in residential areas, schools, or daycare.

EPA will tap approximately \$3 million of funding from Fiscal Year 23 Superfund tax funds dedicated to residential lead cleanups. The State of Washington has agreed to contribute to this removal/early action by directly funding the disposal of contaminated soil. 🗺️

Midnite Mine Superfund Cleanup Progress



Pit 3, Midnite Mine

The Midnite Mine Superfund site is a 350-acre, inactive uranium mine located on the Spokane Indian Reservation. A legacy of the Cold War, uranium mining from 1954 to 1981 left more than 33 million tons of waste rock, unprocessed ore and low-grade ore (also known as protore) laced with contaminants. Contaminants include radionuclides and heavy metals resulting from mining, transport activities and related operations.

In April, EPA reported on 2023 progress and 2024 expectations. Per EPA and the Spokane Tribe of Indians, 2024 work plans include:

- Construction of the cover on Pit 4 Waste Containment Area
- Construction of the Sub-waste Liner in Pit 3 Waste Containment Area and start placing mine waste into Pit 3 Waste Containment Area
- Construction on the 5.2 mile effluent pipeline, including installation of manhole covers on completed line.
- Complete construction on the new water treatment plant with commissioning starting Sept. 2024 through Dec. 2024.
- Design of the west pond, which will replace the south pond when it is removed.
- Employ approximately 120 workers, primarily Tribal members.

Further, in June EPA released the [Midnite Mine Five-Year Review Report](#). Per EPA, its purpose "... is to make sure the selected cleanup actions effectively protect people's health and the environment."

[Click here](#) for EPA's website containing project updates, reports, announcements, and other resources. 🗺️

2024 Lake Roosevelt Fishery Highlights CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Supporting this effort are the WDFW Sherman Creek and Ford Hatcheries, the Spokane Tribal Hatchery and 63 net pens located between Keller Ferry and Kettle Falls. Volunteers support maintenance of net pens and feeding needs from October through their release in May.

In 2023, there were white, green, blue, and orange research tags deployed in rainbow trout raised in Lake Roosevelt net pens. Tags are steadily being returned to fisheries personnel to provide an independent evaluation of the fishery from the annual angler survey/creel program.

The evaluation benefits greatly from angler retention of tagged fish being high, with many are being caught by shore anglers in addition to boat anglers. There have been a few fish caught as far downstream as Bridgeport, Banks Lake, and Rufus Woods, so they are not entirely constrained to Lake Roosevelt.



Rainbow trout from supplemental release

SPOKANE ARM RAINBOW TROUT SUPPLEMENTAL RELEASE

The Spokane Tribal Hatchery annually supplements traditional net pen releases of triploid rainbow trout by releasing fish in the Spokane Arm to add fishing opportunities in a part of the reservoir where net pens are not operated. From March through May, 41,530 triploid rainbow trout were released

at the Little Falls Dam tailrace and Cornelius Campground Boat Launch. Early released fish averaged greater than 1 lb while later fish released averaged 2 plus lbs. Recent catches of rainbow trout greater than 5 lbs each have been reported!

WHITE STURGEON

Beginning in 2017, a recreational fishery for white sturgeon in Lake Roosevelt was reopened after more than 20 years of closure for conservation purposes. The fishery was made possible due to surplus sturgeon from U.S. and Canadian conservation hatchery programs to help stem a decades-long population decline.

Because of white sturgeon recruitment failure (a situation where young fish do not survive and “recruit” to the population), the population was in a perilous position prior to the initiation of the hatchery programs in the early 2000s. In the current program, managers capture sturgeon larvae from the wild for growout in a hatchery, then release around 3,000 fish back into Lake Roosevelt in the fall at a size which ensures good survival.

In June and July, tribal and state fishery managers are out at night collecting sturgeon larvae for that purpose.

The exact cause of recruitment failure has not been determined, but it is the subject of on-going research. In the meantime, the hatchery program ensures continuation of the

population while also supporting both tribal and recreational fisheries.

For 2024, the angling season will run from September 16th – November 30th from Grand Coulee Dam to the Canadian border. The harvest slot (size of sturgeon that can be retained) has not yet been determined.

Looking forward, managers expect to maintain a limited harvest opportunity for the next few years but with gradually tightening slot limits to protect against overharvest. Within a few years, the fishery is likely to move to catch and release only to protect weaker year classes from 2011 to 2016.

Stronger year-classes have been produced consistently since 2017. Once they become large enough, managers anticipate a harvest season can resume.

WALLEYE

Since 2002, the co-managers have conducted Fall Walleye Index Netting (FWIN) to monitor the walleye population. Monitoring enables managers to track the abundance, age, growth, condition, sex ratio, and age at maturity.

WDFW reports that the walleye fishery has remained stable and resilient over time. Abundance of walleye increased significantly in 2023 with a large year class of age-2 walleye (12-16”) that will drive the fishery for the next couple of years. Additionally, larger walleye (16 to 22”) produced during 2018-2020 are available in good numbers.

NORTHERN PIKE

Anglers are encouraged to participate in the [Northern Pike Reward Program](#) at Lake Roosevelt to help reduce the spread of the non-native invasive northern pike.

“The Lake Roosevelt co-managers (Colville Tribes, Spokane Tribe of Indians and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife) are particularly concerned with the negative impacts northern pike pose to tribal and state resources,” said Holly McLellan, the fish biologist for Colville Tribes Fish and Wildlife.

A northern pike can be over 50 inches long and weigh around 45 pounds and a female northern pike can produce up to 250,000 eggs. The female pike is also known to be able to eat frogs, birds, trout, salmon and steelhead with their large teeth and mouth.

Anglers should NOT confuse the native [Northern Pikeminnow](#) with [Northern Pike](#). The native pikeminnow should be released in Lake Roosevelt as their populations are depressed in this reservoir.



Removing northern pike

Salmon Reintroduction Takes Shape



Salmon reintroduction adult release

With \$200 million dollars over 20 years plus additional federal and state dollars pledged, Upper Columbia United Tribes salmon reintroduction efforts are taking shape.

Said Casey Baldwin, Research Scientist for the Colville Tribes, “The agreement was signed in September (2023). But because we developed the [Phase 1 report](#) and the [Phase 2 Implementation Plan](#) several years ago, we’ve been able to hit the ground running. We’ve been implementing pilot projects. Now that the P2IP agreement has been signed we’re ramping up capacity with staffing, contracts and a range of other needs to evaluate the feasibility of salmon reintroduction.”

From a life cycle perspective, current research efforts are focused on outmigration of juveniles going downstream and adults preparing to spawn.

Juveniles from several hatcheries are providing non-ESA listed summer Chinook that are then transferred to acclimation facilities such as net pens throughout the region. Before release, they are being tagged to study their downstream migration patterns. Between last fall and this spring, approximately 165,000 juvenile summer Chinook salmon were released into the blocked area of the upper Columbia.

Sourcing sockeye has proved more challenging because, notes Coeur d’Alene Tribe Anadromous Division Lead Tom Biladeau, “among other factors, one of the only hatcheries that raises them is in Canada.”

Adult Chinook are being sourced from the Douglas PUD Wells Hatchery, then placed in Lake Rufus Woods, Lake Roosevelt, the Spokane River and their tributaries to monitor spawning and other behaviors. For previously released juveniles that make their way back up the Columbia as adults, managers are planning to use trap and haul at Wells and Chief Joseph Dams to get them into the “blocked” area to repatriate them.

Continued on Page 8

2024 Paddle to Sx̣ẉníṭḳẉ



Paddlers at Mission Point




The Inchelium Language & Culture Association hosted the 2024 Paddle to Sx̣ẉníṭḳẉ. Daily paddles started on June 10 at Wynecoop’s Dock on the Spokane Arm of Lake Roosevelt. They first traveled downstream to the confluence of the Columbia River/Lake Roosevelt before migrating north to Mission Point on June 20.

The association describes the journey as “A celebration of our unity and the beautiful river we share.” Traditional tribal canoes led the way.

On the final leg, their path over the water crossed where the Kettle Falls would’ve have been roaring before the creation of Lake Roosevelt. Historically, the [Kettle Falls Fishery](#) was one of the largest, most vibrant locations on the Columbia River for tribes from as far away as present-day Montana to gather, harvest salmon and steelhead, and trade.

As canoes landed at Mission Point, they yelled with their native language and said what tribe(s) was represented on the canoe. After beaching, they carried the canoes up the beach where tribal leaders then led a ceremony for the salmon, the water, the sun, and the people.

The First Annual Kettle Falls Canoe Journey happened in 2016 as a collaborative effort “... to breathe new life into the traditional art of dugout canoe building while also spotlighting important initiatives like fish passage and the ecological clean up and protection of the Columbia River.”

Learn more at the [Sx̣ẉníṭḳẉ website](#), which also includes a video from the 2019 paddle called “Calling the Salmon Home.” 

Upper Columbia United Tribes Receive Upper Columbia River Basin Toxics Reduction Funding



EPA awarded the [Upper Columbia United Tribes](#) (UCUTs) approximately 5.5 million dollars over five years to form and manage the Upper Columbia United Tribes Columbia River Toxics

Reduction Lead Entity (CRTRLE) program. This funding extends the reach of [EPA's Columbia Basin Restoration Program](#) and engages the five member tribes of UCUT, selected NGOs, state and federal agencies, and the communities in reducing toxic pollution entering waterways and ecosystems of the Upper Columbia Basin Watershed.

CRTRLE's overarching goal is to recover the ability for tribal communities to access and connect to traditional foods, recreation, fisheries, plants and animals of the aboriginally occupied landscapes. Resulting toxics reduction will benefit all communities living in the Upper Columbia River Watershed.

This is a multi-phased, large-scale program leveraging partnerships to implement toxic reduction projects with five focus areas. The largest focal area is construction of a comprehensive toxics reduction strategic plan for the Upper Columbia Basin. Four additional areas include agricultural assistance for Best Management Practices, a lead fishing gear exchange, funding for education and outreach, and a publicly accessible historic mining inventory.

UCUT will be awarding funding packages annually to UCUT Tribes and NGOs for projects that accomplish the goals of toxics reduction planning and implementation. Requests for proposals will occur in the late summer of 2024, 2025, and 2026.

The 2024 window for NGOs to submit proposals will begin September 2nd and run until September 30th. Those interested in finding out more about the program or want to submit a proposal, contact Project Manager Caroline Keever at caroline@ucut-nsn.org or Jerry White, CRTRLE Project Coordinator at jerry@ucut-nsn.org 🌐

Spokane Tribe Upper Columbia Basin Contaminant Study Update



WHY ARE THERE GREEN BUOYS ALL OVER LAKE ROOSEVELT?

As part of [EPA's Columbia Basin Restoration Program](#), the Spokane Tribe is conducting a contaminant study throughout Lake Roosevelt extending from the Grand Coulee Dam to the Canadian Border, and upstream to Little Falls Dam in the Spokane River. The goals of the project are to 1) evaluate heavy metals concentrations in water, sediment, biofilm, and crayfish, 2) evaluate the movement of contaminants through the river, and 3) identify which contaminants are entering the food web via biofilm with potential to bioaccumulate to higher trophic level organisms.

The Tribe successfully piloted a sediment particle trap prototype in 2023 designed to capture suspended sediments. Fifteen devices are currently deployed throughout the river and are marked with green "RESEARCH" buoys.

Project researchers are scheduled to collect contaminant concentration data in July and August 2024. Laboratory results are expected later in 2024 and a final report will be issued in 2025.



Sediment trap

The Tribe's final report will help natural resource managers and the community understand more about how contaminants move through the river and enter the food web. The Spokane Tribe is also planning to expand on this work and continue contaminant monitoring for several years if sufficient additional funding is available. 🌐

Lake Roosevelt Agency Updates

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

2024 camping fees are the same as 2023. Visit www.rec.gov, then search by Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area to make a reservation.

All boaters must complete the aquatic invasive species (AIS) quagga/zebra mussel-free self-certification form. [Click here](#) for form and more information.

Fort Spokane Visitor Center is open Thursday to Monday, 9:30am-5pm until Sept 2, 2024. [Click here](#) to learn about Park Ranger programs at Fort Spokane and Kettle Falls.



BUREAU OF RECLAMATION



— BUREAU OF —
RECLAMATION

Reclamation is supporting the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Spokane Tribe of Indians, and Coeur d'Alene Tribe in implementing the Upper Columbia United Tribes' Phase 2 Implementation Plan (See [Salmon Reintroduction Takes Shape](#)). Reclamation is funding technical assistance and on-site support at Grand Coulee Dam. In addition, Reclamation is leading a collaborative effort to address environmental compliance requirements. Reclamation plans to release a draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment by October for public review and comment.

Construction work at the Reclamation fire station in Grand Coulee is near completion. The 22,000-square-foot facility will help ensure reliable protection of Reclamation facilities and lands as well as assist local communities and other agencies through mutual-aid agreements.

EPA Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) Update

As part of a 2006 Settlement Agreement with Teck, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is directing the Upper Columbia River Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS). Its purpose is to establish the nature, extent and possible human and ecological risks of metals and other contaminants released into the environment.

UPLANDS

The uplands refer to approximately 100 square miles (64,000 acres) east and west of the Columbia River below the U.S.–Canada border.

EPA released the Final Upland BERA (Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment) in December 2023. The BERA evaluates the risk of chemicals (in this case primarily metal contaminants) in soils to plants and wildlife. A spring [2024 Fact Sheet](#) released by EPA notes that “Preliminary findings indicate that cadmium, lead, and zinc present the greatest and most widespread risk to plants, invertebrates, mammals, and birds exposed to soil in the upland area. Most impacted areas are remote and relatively steep.”

RIVER

The Draft Aquatic Baseline Ecological Risk Assessment (BERA) evaluates risk to plants, wildlife, fish, and other organisms in and along the Columbia River from the U.S. – Canada Border to Grand Coulee Dam. Teck submitted the Aquatic BERA in April. EPA and the Participating Parties (Ecology, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Spokane Tribe of Indians and Department of Interior) are currently reviewing the assessment.

LEARN MORE

For summaries of studies and human health assessments completed, visit lrf.org/environment and click Public Guides. EPA's summary information can be found at epa.gov/columbiariver/upper-columbia-river-study-area. 🌐

EPA Proposes Adding the Upper Columbia River to the National Priorities List

In March, EPA proposed listing the Upper Columbia River (UCR) as a Superfund site on the National Priorities List (NPL).

Per EPA, “NPL sites are areas where there are known releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. Upland soils are contaminated with lead, arsenic, zinc, cadmium and other metals. Sediments in the river are contaminated with slag and metals, including lead, zinc, cadmium, copper, and mercury. There is a significant quantity of slag remaining in the river system. Levels of metals found in the Columbia River surface water are below drinking water standards.”

[Click here](#) for EPA news release. [Click here](#) for one page EPA summary of the proposed listing.

The site boundaries are not determined as part of a listing. EPA would establish boundaries after all investigative work is completed and there is a full understanding of where contamination is and the risk it poses to human health and the environment. The boundaries of a site would then be documented in a Record of Decision which also identifies the cleanup actions necessary to address the contamination.

[February 2024](#) and [October 2023](#) Forum articles provide EPA's rationale for proposing the listing, Washington State and tribal support, and counties opposed. The Forum's [2020 Public Guide](#) summarizes EPA's Human Health Risk Assessment, including the public being able to safely recreate on Lake Roosevelt and the Upper Columbia River.

EPA accepted comments on the proposed listing from March 7 through May 6, 2024.

EPA will consider all comments submitted, then publish a response to the comments before determining whether to add the UCR to the National Priorities List. 🌐

Upper Columbia River Meeting

You are invited to attend a community meeting about Upper Columbia River hosted by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Citizens for a Clean Columbia

EPA will provide updates on investigation related reports, sampling, and removal work in the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility study area. Washington Department of Ecology will discuss their work in Northport. Representatives from the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation will present information on their air monitoring project.

- **Date:** Wednesday, July 17, 2024
- **Time:** Doors open at 5:30 p.m. for an interactive open house session. Presentations begin at 6 p.m., followed by a Q&A session
- **Location:** Northport High School, 404 10th St., Northport, WA, 99157

For questions or to receive information in alternate formats, contact EPA Community Involvement Coordinator Kristin Ching at Ching.Kristin@epa.gov or call 206-900-4344. Please also let us know if you would like to sign up for future email updates about Upper Columbia River investigation and cleanup work.



For more information, visit epa.gov/node/167535



Tick Tock, Columbia River Treaty Clock Nears Midnight

This September Columbia River Treaty (CRT) flood risk management provisions change to “called upon,” also called “real time operations” or “real time flood risk management.” The United States and Canada have been in negotiations since 2018 to modernize the Treaty and thus avoid this situation.

Called upon means the United States will call on Canada to specify flood risk management space needs from Canada, which (following a consultation) Canada must then provide and be compensated for. Most important, the United States would need to demonstrate the use of all related storage in our reservoirs before requesting Canadian space.

This will result in changes to reservoir operations and flows that will be felt up and down the Columbia River. [Click here](#) for charts and explanation of potentially deep Lake Roosevelt drawdowns.

The U.S. State Department, which has led the American negotiating team, is noticeably silent with updates. Their [Columbia River Treaty website](#) has not been updated since an



August 2023 news release regarding the 18th round of Treaty negotiations. Per the release, “As committed by President Biden and Prime Minister Trudeau at the conclusion of the President’s March visit to Canada, the U.S. negotiation team has further accelerated negotiation efforts towards an agreement that meets the needs of the Columbia Basin with greater certainty and improved results.”

Close to a year later, the governmental silence is deafening regarding “accelerated negotiation” or progress. Barring an administrative fix to temporarily work around Treaty provisions, communities and the environment writ large will be flowing into uncharted waters up and down the Columbia come September.

A sign of rising tensions is that Chelan, Douglas, and Grant County PUDs (the Mid-Cs) filed a July 17 lawsuit against the Bonneville Power Administration & U.S. Army Corps regarding the CRT. Part of the lawsuit asks the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Washington to find that “the U.S. Entity has no authority to impose conditions on the Mid-Cs’ use of the Columbia River flow after Sept. 15.”

In addition, Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers added the following report language into the State and Foreign Operations FY25 Funding Bill being considered. “The Committee encourages the Secretary of State to share with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the foreign policy implications of listing the Upper Columbia River, Washington on the National Priorities List. The Committee believes the Department of State should consult with the EPA on such listings that may have foreign policy implications.”

Stay tuned. 🌐

2024 Lake Roosevelt Fishery Highlights

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

The co-managers have been working to remove the Northern Pike from the lake since 2015. Since that time, 20,015 Pike have been removed. The good news is that the number of Pike captured per net has dropped from a high of 3.08 in 2017 to less than 0.50 Pike per net in 2024. Their distribution, however, is slowly creeping downstream with the highest catch now occurring in the middle sections (Hunters and Gifford areas) of the reservoir.

Researchers will continue with the standardized removal program through 2025. This includes an increased gillnet effort in the spring, when pike are in shallow waters preparing to spawn, and adjustments based on population abundance gillnet surveys that occur in the fall. 🌐

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Salmon Reintroduction Takes Shape

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

A long list of infrastructure and research projects are also on the drawing board. This includes development of a Coeur d’Alene Tribe acclimation facility at Sqweyu’ on Hangman Creek within Spokane city limits, a Spokane Tribe of Indians acclimation facility on the Little Spokane, and Colville Confederated Tribes net pens in the Sanpoil Arm of Lake Roosevelt and an acclimation facility in the San Poil watershed. Juvenile salmon will reside at these locations to “imprint” to these watersheds, effectively letting them know where ‘home’ is when they return as adults.

Long term, researchers will also be planning fish passage facilities, performing research needed for their design, and a host of other considerations needed to achieve the ultimate goal of full-scale reintroduction and permanent passage. Said Conor Giorgi, Spokane Tribal Anadromous Program Manager, “We’re being consistent with taking a phased, best available science approach to bringing salmon back.” 🌐