

## 7.0 Conclusions

The Columbia River Basin is a unique and vibrant ecosystem that is at risk from toxic contaminants. Many challenges lie ahead to restore this ecosystem. This *State of the River Report for Toxics* is EPA Region 10's first attempt to understand and describe the current status and trends of toxics in this region of the United States. This report is intended to serve as a starting point for increasing public understanding about the impacts of toxics in the Basin and for finding ways to work in partnership with others to improve and expand current toxics reduction efforts. Specifically, its primary purposes are to inform citizens and decision-makers about the toxics problem and potential solutions; serve as a catalyst for increased citizen involvement and increased action; and inspire additional, more-efficient use of resources for increased toxics reduction and assessment actions.

While several monitoring studies are under way in the Basin to improve our understanding of the toxics problem, we must develop a more comprehensive and collaborative monitoring and research program. In addition, we must expand efforts to identify the sources of toxics in the Basin, characterize the types of contaminants, and quantify the contaminant load from these sources. We must also identify additional effective actions to reduce toxics and protect

the health of the Columbia River Basin ecosystem, and we must continue to implement those actions.

This report focused on four contaminants: mercury, DDT and its breakdown products, PCBs, and PBDEs. However, we recognize that other toxics, including additional metals, dioxins, radionuclides, and pesticides as well as pharmaceuticals and personal care products, are also potential contaminants of concern. We know that these other contaminants need to be addressed in the future.

Meanwhile, many groups are conducting pollution prevention and cleanup efforts to reduce toxics overall and to reduce toxics in water, sediment, plants, and animals in the Columbia River Basin. Despite limited resources, these groups are making significant strides in reducing toxics in certain areas, but additional efforts need to be expanded throughout the Basin. The following Toxics Reduction Initiatives represent a first attempt at describing the next steps in the effort to reduce toxics. We look forward to a future public dialogue throughout the Basin as we refine and implement these initiatives.