

# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



Upper Columbia River, Northern Washington  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 10

Winter 2005

## Upper Columbia River RI/FS Update

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is studying hazardous waste contamination in the U.S. portion of the Columbia River from the U.S./Canada border to the Grand Coulee Dam and surrounding upland areas. The study is called a *Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS)* and will take about four years to complete. We will keep you up to date with our progress and future activities by periodically sending fact sheets such as this to our mailing list.

### In This Issue

- Community Involvement Plan available
- Draft RI/FS scoping plan available
- Upcoming activities:
  - River sediment sampling to begin spring 2005
  - Fish tissue sampling in fall 2005
- Project history
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### DRAFT RI/FS SCOPING PLAN AVAILABLE

The scoping plan is a “road map” for the RI/FS process. It includes what steps EPA plans to follow during the course of the investigation, but does not contain detailed information. As the investigation moves forward, detailed planning documents will be developed according to the steps described in the scoping plan.

You can find a copy of the 40-page Draft RI/FS Scoping Plan on our website, at one of the information repositories, or you can request a copy by contacting Deborah Neal at (800) 424-4372, or [neal.deborah@epa.gov](mailto:neal.deborah@epa.gov).

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PLAN AVAILABLE

EPA has developed a Community Involvement Plan that describes how we plan to involve and inform community members during the RI/FS. It identifies affected communities, tribal governments, and other agencies we are working with, discusses ways to get involved and who to contact with questions, and provides a summary of some of the comments and concerns we’ve heard so far.

The plan was developed with input from representatives of government agencies and affected tribes, elected officials, and leaders of community and environmental groups. It is a working document intended to be revised as we learn more about the needs and preferences of the local communities.

A Community Involvement Plan is a tool designed to be helpful to you, so please let us know if you have suggestions for how to improve it.

You can find a copy of the four-page Community Involvement Plan on our website, at one of the information repositories, or you can request a copy by contacting Deborah Neal at (800) 424-4372, or [neal.deborah@epa.gov](mailto:neal.deborah@epa.gov).

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

### River sediment and fish tissue sampling to begin in 2005

In April and May 2005, EPA will begin collecting sediment samples from the Upper Columbia River to test for environmental contamination, such as heavy metals (mercury, lead), PCBs, and dioxins and furans. In September and October, we will also begin collecting fish tissue samples. Both sediment and fish tissue samples will be collected throughout the 150-mile stretch of river from the U.S./Canada border to the Grand Coulee Dam (*please see map on back page*).

#### **Available now: Draft Phase I Sediment Sampling Approach and Rationale**

This document provides detailed information about EPA's proposed 2005 sediment sampling activities. A full copy is available for review at each of the Information Repository locations, or you may request a copy on compact disc. [Note: This document will not be available on EPA's website due to the large file size.]

A four-page *Technical Briefing Sheet* is also available, which provides a summary of the sediment sampling document. The briefing sheet includes information about why EPA is collecting the samples, and how and where they will be collected. You can find copies of the *Technical Briefing Sheet* on EPA's website, at the Information Repositories, or we can send you a copy electronically or by mail if requested.

#### **Available now: Draft Phase I Fish Tissue Sampling Approach and Rationale**

This document provides detailed information about EPA's proposed fish tissue sampling activities planned for September and October 2005. A full copy is available for review at each of the Information Repository locations, or you may request a copy on compact disc. [Note: This document will not be available on EPA's website due to the large file size.]

As with the sediment sampling document described at left, a shorter *Technical Briefing Sheet* is also available for the fish tissue sampling document. The briefing sheet includes information about why EPA is collecting fish tissue samples, and how and where they will be collected. You can find copies of the *Technical Briefing Sheet* on EPA's website, at the Information Repositories, or we can send you a copy electronically or by mail if requested.

## PROJECT HISTORY

Past studies by federal and state agencies have shown increased levels of hazardous waste contamination in Upper Columbia River sediments, including heavy metals such as cadmium, copper, lead, mercury and zinc, and other contaminants like dioxins and furans.

In August 1999, the Colville Confederated Tribes petitioned EPA to conduct an assessment of environmental contamination in the Upper Columbia River. The petition expressed

concerns about risks to people's health and the environment from contamination in the river.

In 2001, EPA collected samples of river sediment to learn more about the types and amounts of pollution that exists. The results showed that contamination is present in the lake and river sediments, and that a more detailed investigation is needed to evaluate possible risks to

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

In each fact sheet we will try to include answers to frequently asked questions. You can also visit our website to find answers to other common questions.

**Q:** Is it safe to eat fish from the Upper Columbia River?

**A:** One of the purposes of the RI/FS is to answer this important question. We will be collecting fish tissue samples later this year to give EPA and other agencies a better understanding of the level of contamination in Columbia River fish.

The Washington State Department of Health has evaluated this question using the data currently available, and has issued a fish-consumption advisory for mercury in walleye in Lake Roosevelt. There is also a statewide fish consumption advisory for mercury in bass which applies to Lake Roosevelt. You can find information on fish advisories in Washington by visiting the website for the Washington State Department of Health at <http://www.doh.wa.gov/> (click on *Topics A-Z*, and then *F* for *Fish Consumption Advisory*).

For more information, you may contact the Washington State Department of Health at 1-877-485-7316, either **David McBride**, email [dave.mcbride@doh.wa.gov](mailto:dave.mcbride@doh.wa.gov) or **Liz Carr**, email [liz.carr@doh.wa.gov](mailto:liz.carr@doh.wa.gov).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please let us know how we can provide information that meets your needs.

### EPA Staff Contacts

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### On the internet

You can find past and current fact sheets, certain technical documents, maps, frequently asked questions, and other useful information about the Upper Columbia River project, by visiting EPA's website at <http://www.epa.gov/r10earth> (click on Index A-Z, then U, then Upper Columbia River).

### Information Repositories

For your convenience, information about this project is available at eight locations throughout the project area. Each repository contains the same information, including full copies of draft and final technical documents, fact sheets, and other information produced by EPA. Before you visit a location, please call ahead for business hours:

Northport: Northport Town Hall, 315 Summit Street, (509) 732-4450

Colville: Colville Public Library, 195 S. Oak Street, (509) 684-6620

Inchelium: Inchelium Tribal Resource Center, 12 Community Loop, (509) 634-2791

Nespelem: Office of Environmental Trust, Colville Confederated Tribes, 1 Colville, (509) 634-2425

Grand Coulee: Grand Coulee Library, 225 Federal Street, (509) 633-0972

Wellpinit: Spokane Tribe Department of Natural Resources, 6290 B Ford-Wellpinit Road, (509) 258-9042

Spokane: Spokane Library, 906 W. Main, (509) 444-5334

*Upper Columbia River Project  
Community Involvement Plan Available  
Sampling to Begin  
Northern Washington  
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Upper Columbia River Project Area

**Legend**

-  EPA Information Repository Location
-  Indian Reservation



*For people with disabilities, please call Deborah Neal at 1-800-424-4372 if you have requests for reasonable accommodation. TTY users, please call the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339.*

