

What Do Salmon Need?

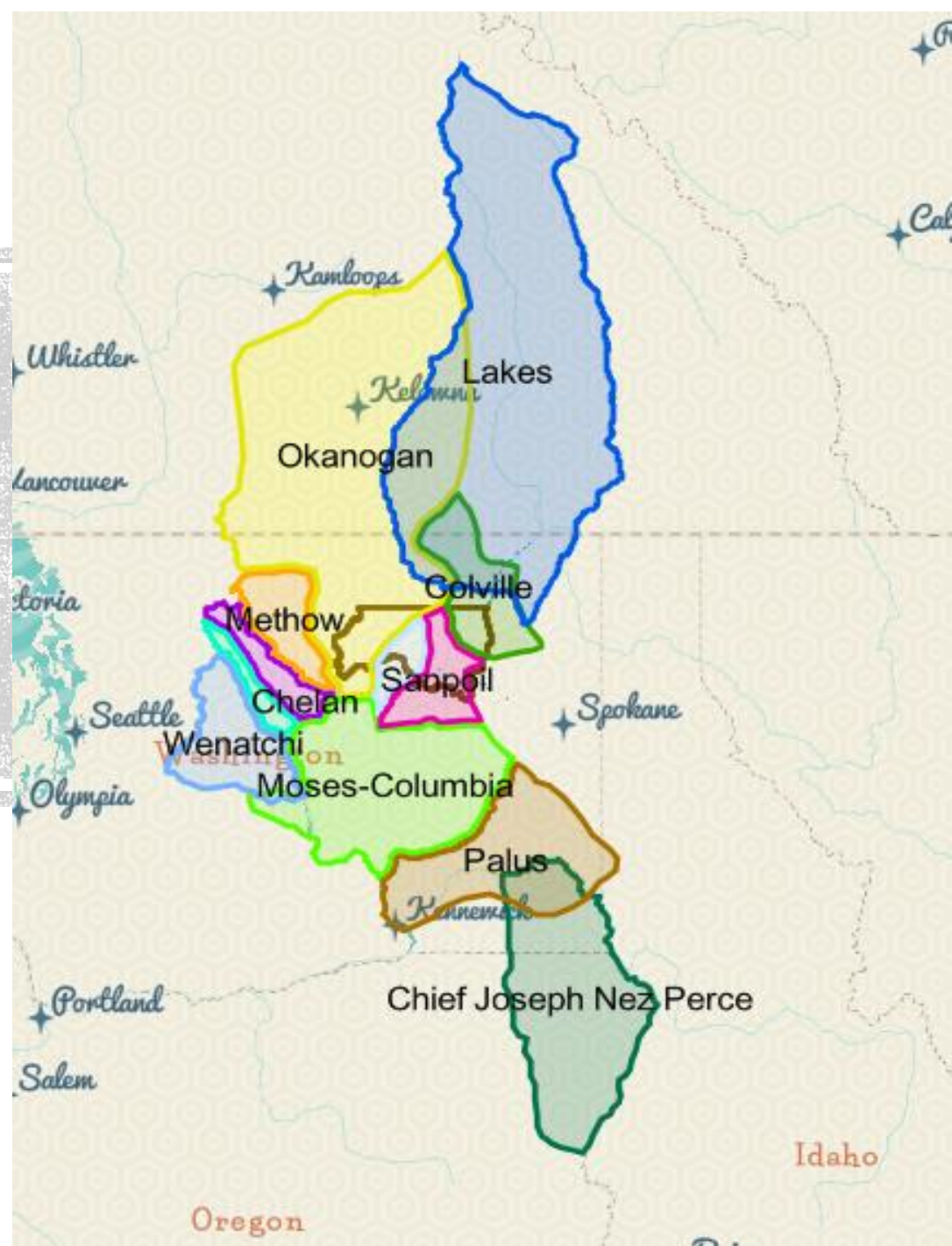
Upper Columbia Salmon Recovery Board Summit
Honoring the Past, Shaping the Future
January 22, 2026

John Sirois – say'ay'

Traditional Territory Advisor



Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and Traditional Territories



Languages of the Colville Confederated Tribes

nsəlxcin Okanagan(sʔuk^wnaʔqín), Colville (sx^wyʔitp),
Methow(sʔaʔmuʔəx^wəx^w) Lakes(sńʔaýckstx),
Nespelem(nspiləm), San Poil(sńpʔawílx)

nxaʔamxčín Wenatchi(šnpəšq^wáwšəx^w),
Chelan(ščəlámxəx^w), Entiat(šntiyátk^wəx^w), Moses
Columbia(škwáxčənəx^w)

titoqatimt-sahaptin Chief Joseph Nez Perce(wal'wáma)

palúšpam-sahaptin-Palus(palúšpam)

“The language is the culture, you cannot separate them.”

-Okanagan Elder





This river is everything to Indigenous peoples. It brought our food back to us, provided transportation, watered all of the beings in our world.

n'pt'akw' – The Big River





Cultural Foundations of Salmon for Indigenous Peoples



mus il'mithlm Four Chiefs

Water is Life

- Four Chiefs;
 - salmon, bear, bitterroots, service berry
- Relied heavily on that source of nourishment; physical/spiritual
- First Scientists who knew the seasons and harvested what the land provided





**Our *Sovereignty*
is inextricably
tied to the land,
to our language,
to our relation
with all things
that exist on
tm̓x̌w̓úlaʔx̌w̓**



[Wenatchi] Indian Fishing in Wenatchee River

B. C. Collier, albumen silver print, circa 1906

FROM *ENDURING SPIRIT*, FORTHCOMING



**nsíqəłt,
one of the most
productive
fisheries in the
Columbia River
drainage.**





“Everyone got an equal share so that the fish would not think humans were being stingy or selfish and so refuse to return. The fate and well being of the future depended on how people treated the fish.”
-- *Mourning Dove*



Historical Factors of Salmon Survival Today

Salmon have faced additional man made challenges over the last 180 years

Traditional Cultural Relationships, Treaties, Land, Water and Natural Systems



Extinguish Indigenous Land Title & Connection (1774 – 1900's)

- Treaties sought peace, then military alliances and finally to annex land for the US Colonies.
- US Courts have held that Tribal Nations **reserved** lands and rights while ceding large tracts of their lands.
- Stevens Treaties quickly executed during a short time frame
 - reflected the zeal of Manifest Destiny
 - extinguish Indigenous title as quickly as possible
 - conflict of interest
- The creation of National Parks exacerbated removal of Indigenous Peoples



Exterminate Indigenous Food Supply



- Gov. Stevens attempted to carry forward the same strategy
- One of Steven's first actions was to block Nisqually River's salmon run to apply pressure
- Tribes fought for their traditional foods and that fight continues today

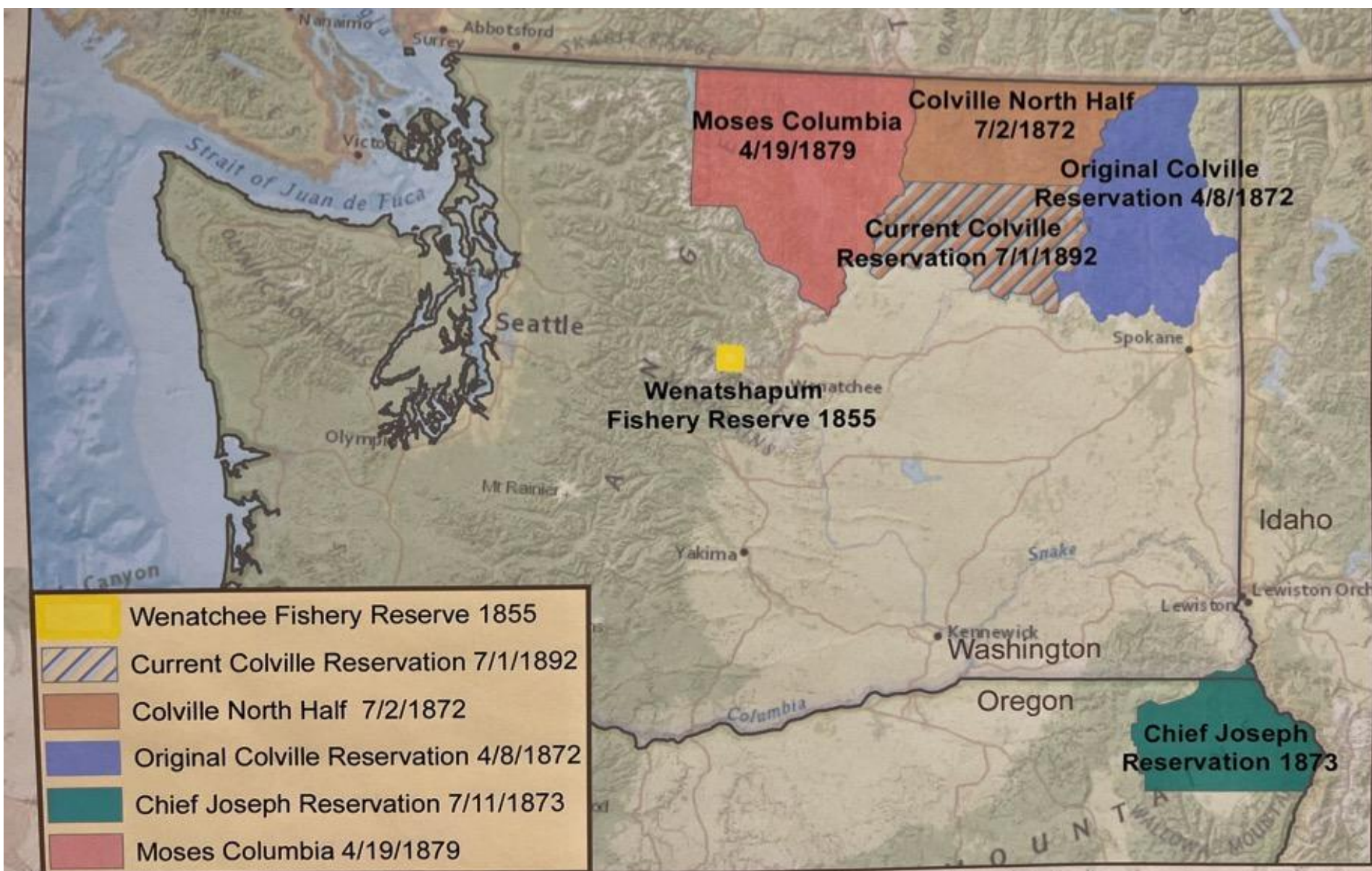




**...”if you do not
accept the terms
offered**

**...you will walk in
blood knee deep.”**





Reservations Established By Presidential Executive Orders
 April 9, 1872; April 19, 1872; July 2, 1872; March 6 1880
 Wenatchi Reservation as Marked by Colonel George Wright 1856



- Attempts to start Commercial Salmon efforts by settlers in 1832
- Hudson Bay Company drove out all others early on.
- Relatively first successful cannery was at Eagle Cliff in 1866 and then 8 canneries in 1873



Chinese workers in salmon cannery, probably Astoria. Courtesy Oreg. Hist. Soc. Research Lib., 24568



MOST IMPACTED AND LEAST MITIGATED

**SALMON REINTRODUCTION EFFORTS
ABOVE CHIEF JOSEPH DAM**



Columbia River System Operations

Indigenous Peoples fought to protect their waters, foods and lands from the beginning

- Colville Confederated Tribes filed suit in 1936 before Grand Coulee Dam was built. It was legislatively settled in 1997.
- Blocked millions of anadromous fish for generations
- Columbia River was/is radically modified to meet the needs of downstream without consideration of the River's health
- Leavenworth Fish Hatchery Complex constructed to mitigate for loss of salmon at Grand Coulee Dam built on Colville Reservation.



Ceremony of Tears for Last Salmon – Kettle Falls, c. 1940

(photos courtesy of Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture)



Columbia River Treaty

Adopted 1964

Originally, the Treaty was limited;

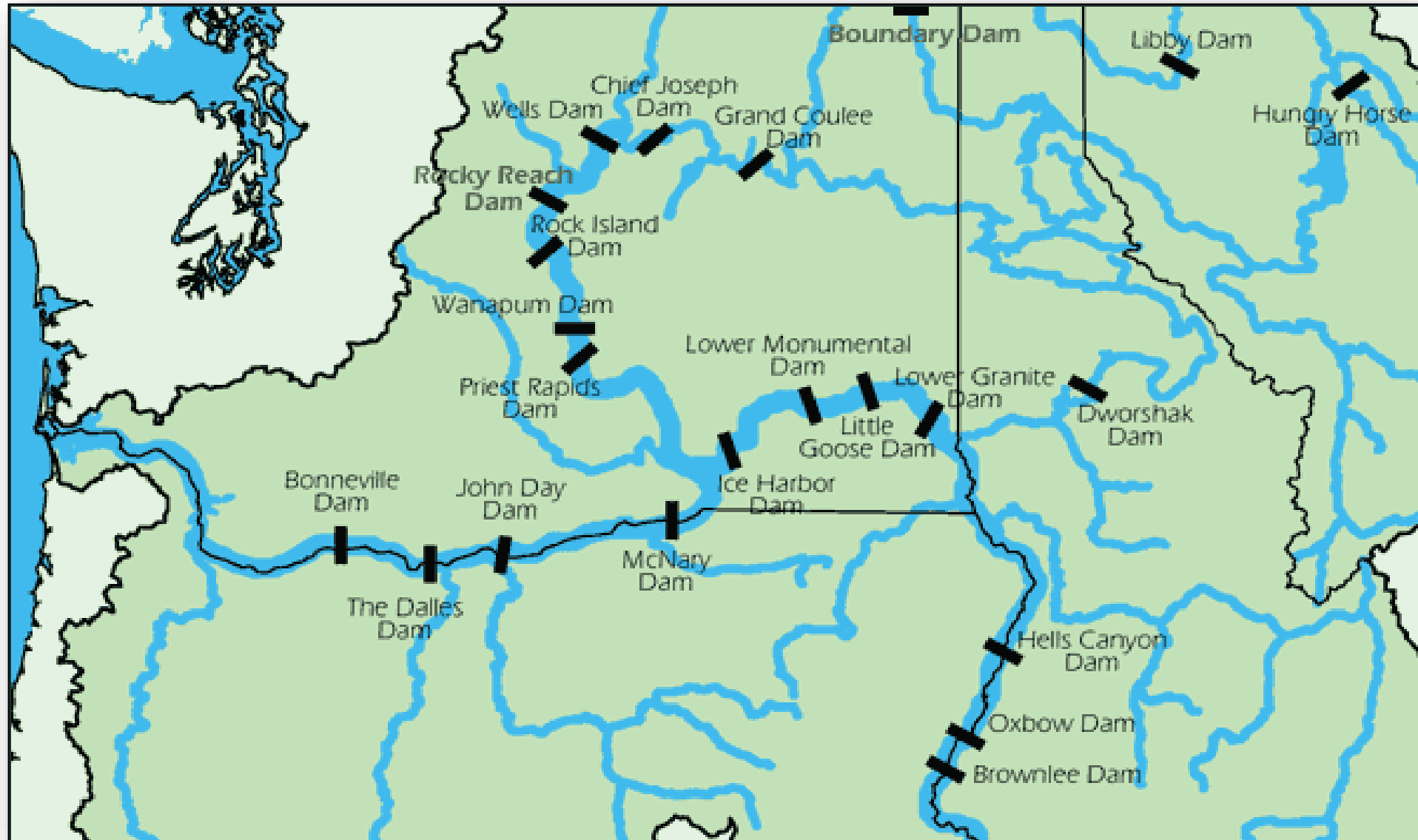
- **Hydropower Production**
 - Building, Operating Dams
- **Assured Flood Storage by Canadian Dams**
 - 9 MAF Assured, One time payment of \$64M

It **did not consider ecosystem function **nor** the rights and interests of Tribal and First Nations*

Recent changes to “called upon” reservoir storage to prevent floods.



Legacy of Human Caused Impacts Changed the Water Regime in the Columbia River Basin – 1950 to 1980



Equity and Environmental Justice?

Upriver flooded **permanently** for occasional flood control downriver

- 40% of salmon loss came from above Grand Coulee
- Salmon produced inland, but harvest is at ocean and lower river
- In the past, **70%** of BPA mitigation dollars for salmon goes to downriver projects
- BPA funding to areas above blocked area: **16% of their funds**
- BPA focuses on ***certainty*** of power generation
- NW Power Act of 1980 because of the decimation of Salmon runs

As a society, we do not ask what does Salmon need, nor we consider what does the River need?



Colville Tribal Conservation Efforts

- Holistic Goal and 3P Process
 - Management inline with cultural values and goals of restoring the concept “quam quamt” – wealth of all things
- Chief Joseph Hatchery produces 2 million fry to the Columbia River System
- Acquired McLaughlin Falls and 9,243 acre Figlenski Ranch on the former North Half for wildlife habitat
- Acquired Hummingbird Ranch in the Methow will also serve as a cultural touchstone with native plant restoration
- Diversifying the species that once were here; Lynx, Sharp Tail Grouse, Bison, Wolf, Antelope, Anadromous Stocks

Historic CTCR Chinook and Sockeye Efforts in the Columbia and Okanogan Rivers

Over 20 years of Sockeye collaboration between the CTCR & Okanogan Nation Alliance

Shared Harvest takes place at the mouth of the Okanogan and Columbia Rivers

Dreamcatcher uses a purse sein net to collect Chinook and Sockeye for brood stock, subsistence and to share with other Tribes in the blocked area.

Selective Chinook harvest preserves wild populations while providing the brood stock for Chief Joseph Hatchery.



Tribes & First Nations Lead in Fish Passage Efforts in Blocked Area

Fish Reintroduction at Two US Dams

A precise response to the NPCC 2014 Program Amendments with a multi-phase investigation

3 Pathways Exist to Address Fish Passage

1. Columbia River Treaty (EbF) *International*
2. NPCC (at BPA Discretion) *Domestic*
3. Tribal Initiatives (Funded Phase 1) *Tribal*

Currently:

- **UCUTs, implementing Phase 2 Studies with Cultural/Educational Salmon Releases**
- **Bring Salmon Home with First Nations**



Northwest Power Planning Council -
Established by the Northwest Power
Act of 1980 to address the
disappearing salmon runs.



UCUT SALMON AND FISH PASSAGE – PHASED APPROACH

Phase 1: *Completed, Reviewed and Supported*

- Evaluate passage studies at hydroelectric projects
- Investigate habitat availability, suitability and salmon survival potential
- Investigate possible cost of upstream and downstream passage options

Phase 2: *Underway, Finalizing the Implementation Plan*

- Design and test reintroduction strategies and fish passage facilities at CJD & GCD
- Reintroduction pilot projects ***Recent funding of \$200 million**
- Monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management

Phase 3:

- Review results to determine implementation & permanent inclusion to the Program

Columbia River Concerns, Beyond the Columbia River Treaty

1. Legacy Pollution; Teck Metals, Silver Valley, Montana Mining, and DOD/DOE projects (Hanford, Fairchild AFB).
2. Agriculture and Irrigation; pesticides, herbicides, animals
3. CRSO-EIS impacts going forward
4. Reservoir mismanagement (erosion, flows, dissolved gases)
5. Spokane River WQ Standards; Ecology's variances?
6. "Digital" Agriculture; server farms located for cheap power

Historic and contemporary! We need action by all agencies! We all are impacted by this reality!



Fish Passage Already Taking Place!

Spokane Tribe Welcomed Back Released Chinook from 2017

The Spokane Tribe reported four (4) Chinook returned from a class released of 753 Chinook released prior.

The Spokane Tribe gave this salmon the name: “She who traces her way back”



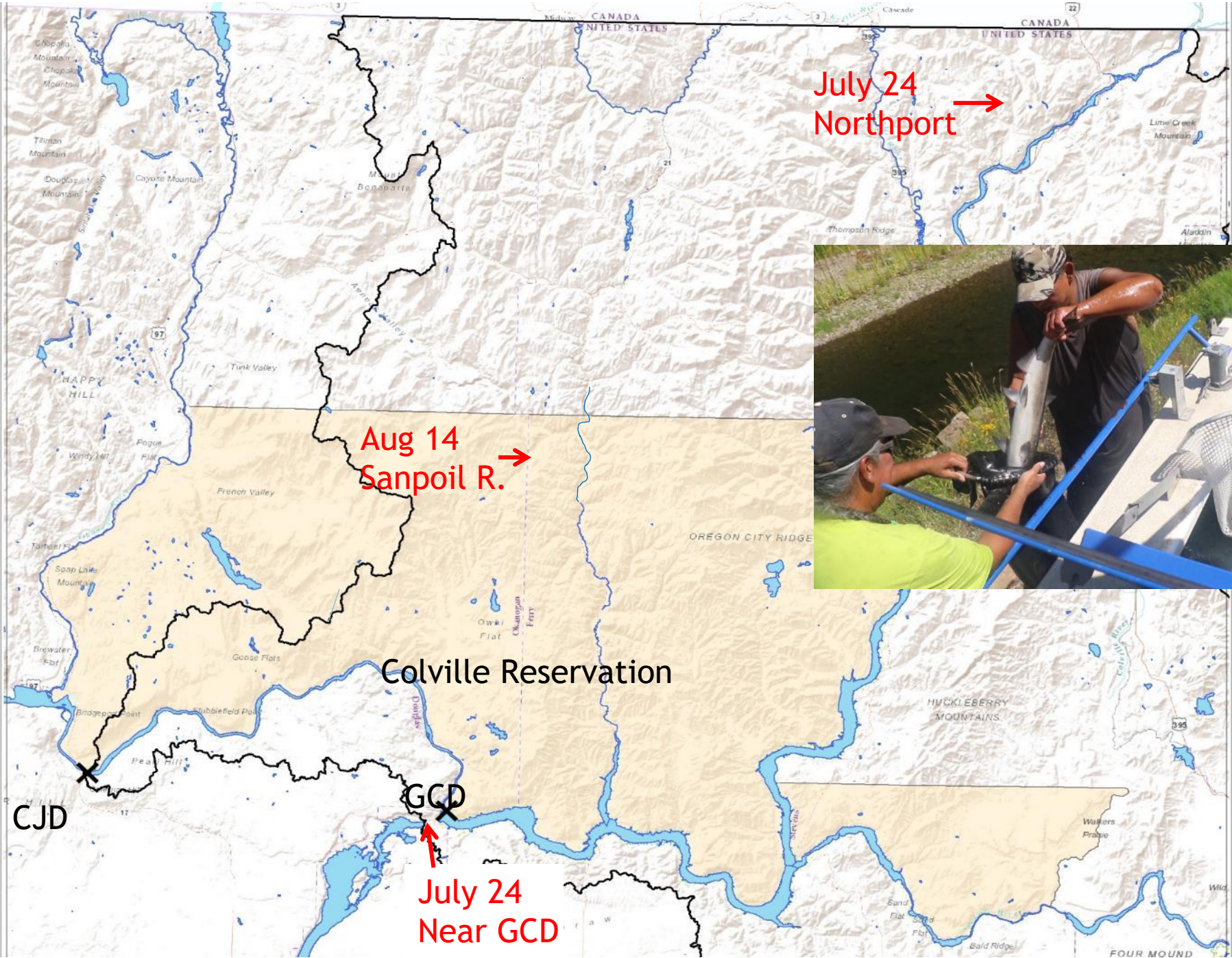
Colville Confederated Tribes Salmon Reintroduction Efforts

Educational and Cultural Releases:

- Successive years of data show salmon move upstream
- Most of the salmon are detected multiple times at the furthest upstream locations
- Spawning surveys are conducted each year after each release in all of the watersheds including the main stem.
- In an early study, 6 redds were observed near CJD, one in the Nespelem River.



2020
adult
summer
Chinook
releases

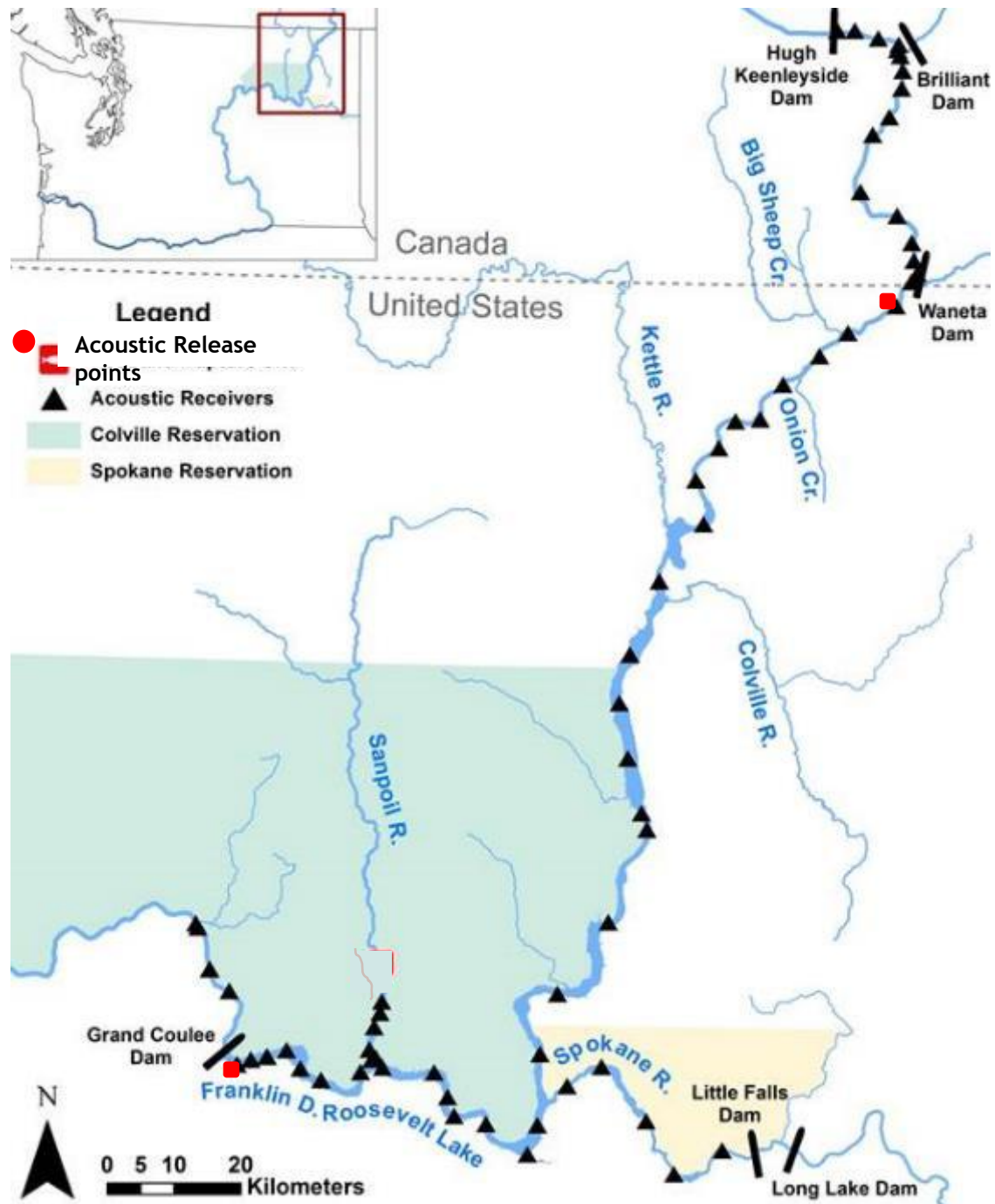


Spawning near CJD



2020 Lake Roosevelt Acoustic Tracking Study

- Dozens of receivers
- Analyzed hundreds of thousands of detections
- Initial reports from Canada suggest ~20 fish were detected there
- Initial reports from DPUD suggest several detected downstream of Chief Joseph Dam

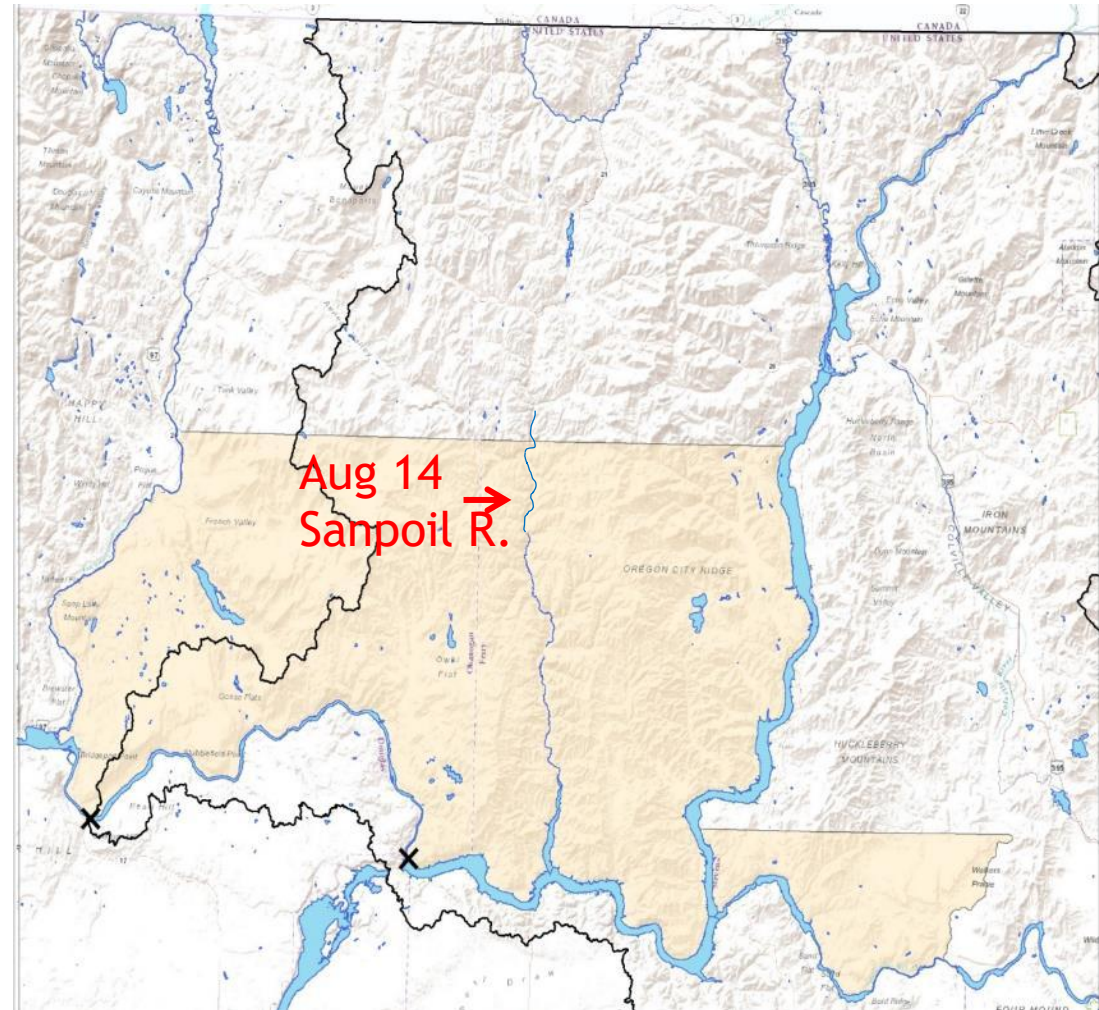
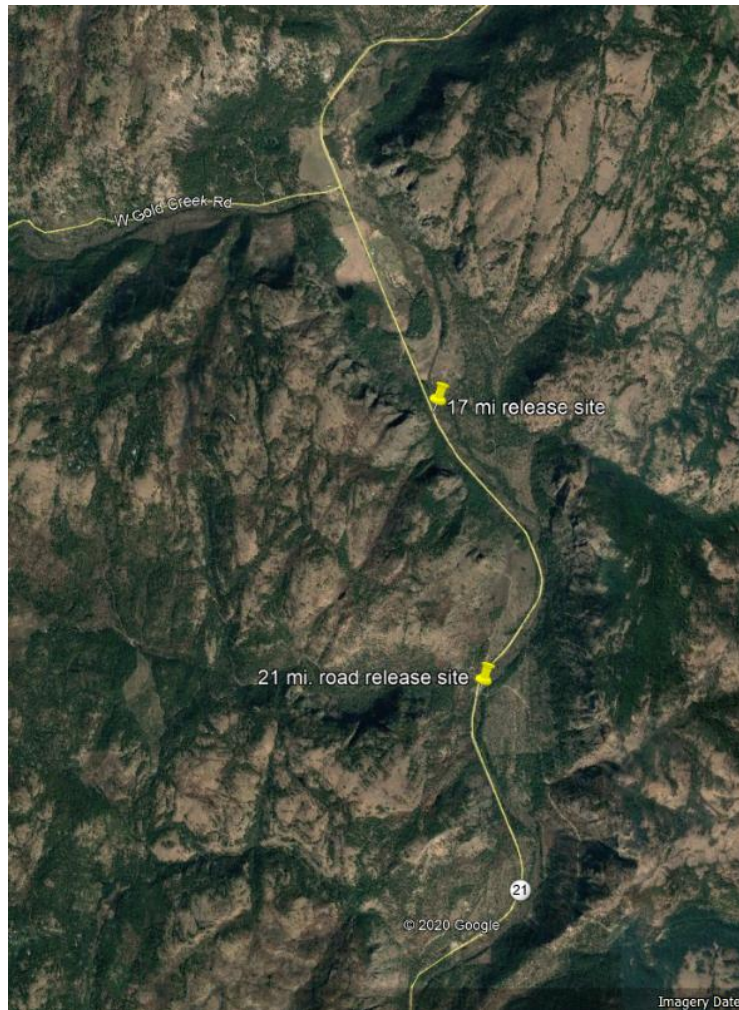


Sanpoil River Salmon Study, 2020



Sanpoil River Salmon Study, 2020

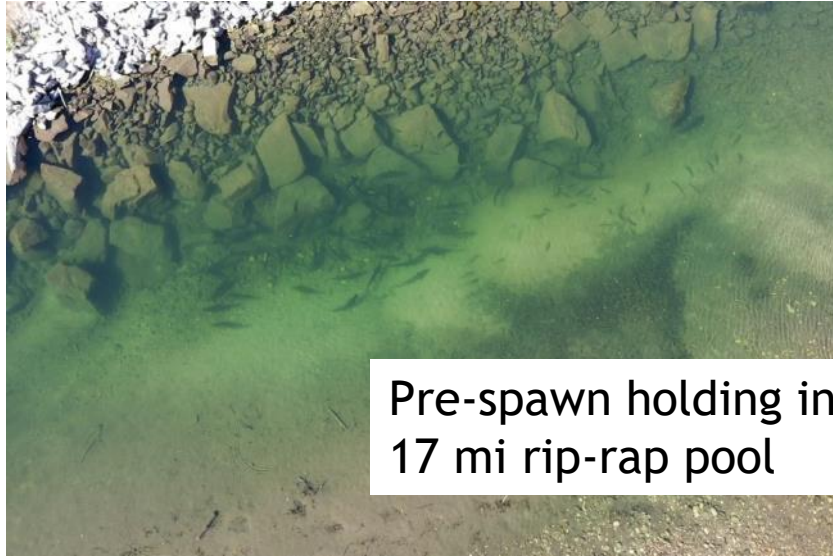
- Released 100 adult salmon in 2 holding pools in mid-August with PIT tags



Sanpoil River Salmon Study, 2020



Sanpoil River Salmon Study/Release



ntytyix sumaxt' (salmon spirit) Lamlamt'

Released around 120 salmon these ones were
in the sɛnpɫ'ɪlx (San Poil) today good day to be
indigenous

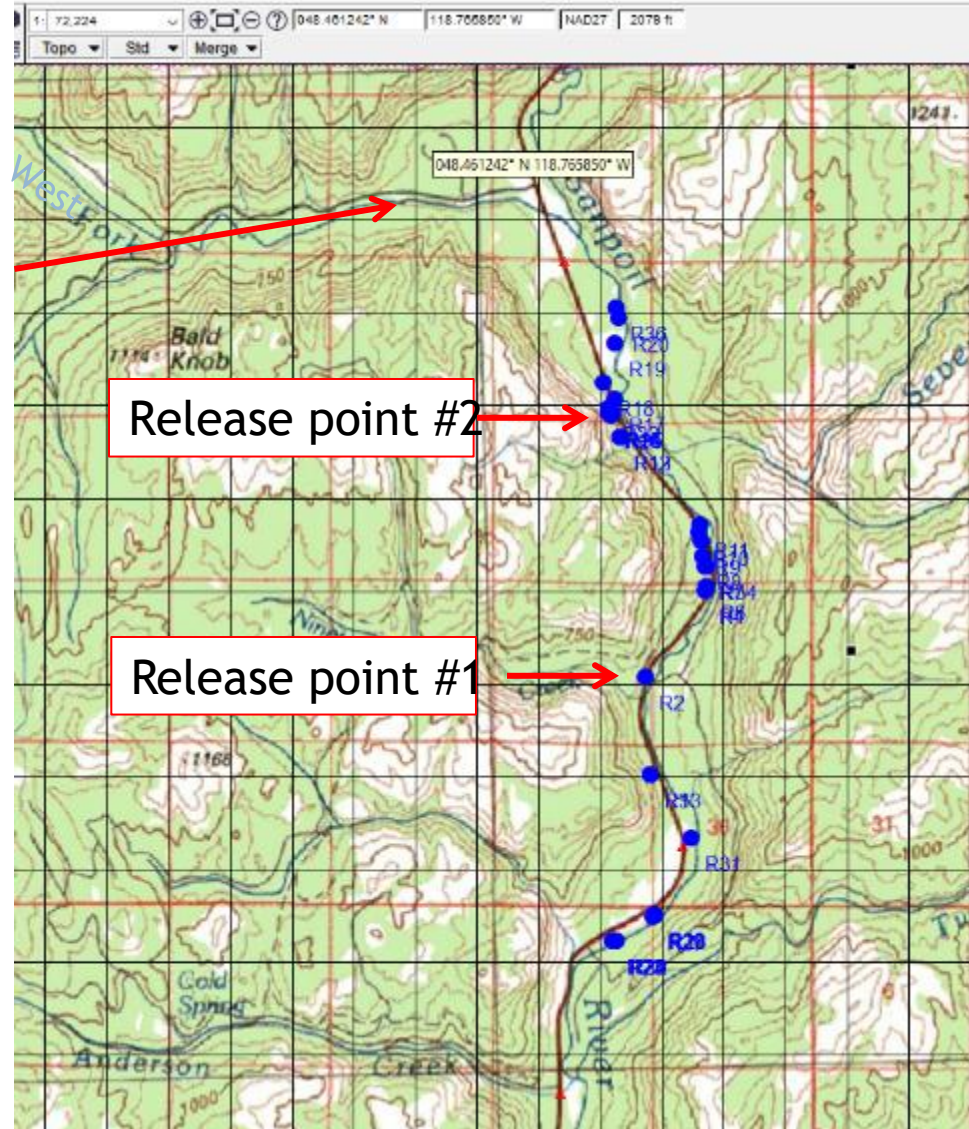


Sanpoil River Salmon Study, 2020

- Counted 36 redds (spawning nest) between Oct 8-22, in a 5 mile reach
- Few fish detected in the West Fork (PIT)
- 3 fish detected at the weir, 38 mi. downstream in late October

Future information from this work....

- Establish holding ponds to acclimate
- Continue tracking to improve site locations



2025 Sockeye Release in the “Blocked Area”

- Releases into Rufus Woods Reservoir and Roosevelt Reservoir
- This species has the greatest potential for production
- When there are available numbers, we will move those fish
- We must monitor and screen for diseases for all releases
 - Many agencies list this area as non-anadromous bearing designations, ***this is no longer true.***
- How can we plan for future permanent passage facilities?
- How do we create a sustainable subsistence fishery within all of the regulations and limitations currently in place?
- **How much time do these Salmon populations have?**

2025 Sockeye Release in the “Blocked Area”



The Future of Salmon in the Upper Columbia

- Continue cultural and scientific releases
- Refine our Understanding of Salmon Movement in the reservoirs
- Predator/prey interactions
- Instream and streamside egg incubation
- Juvenile rearing and migration
- Water Quality and Quantity
- Fully Fund Salmon Reintroduction effort
- Permanent Fish Passage Facilities
- **Salmon Coalition with a region-wide voice. *Who's ready?***





Ceremonial Fishery at Nespelem Creek 2025

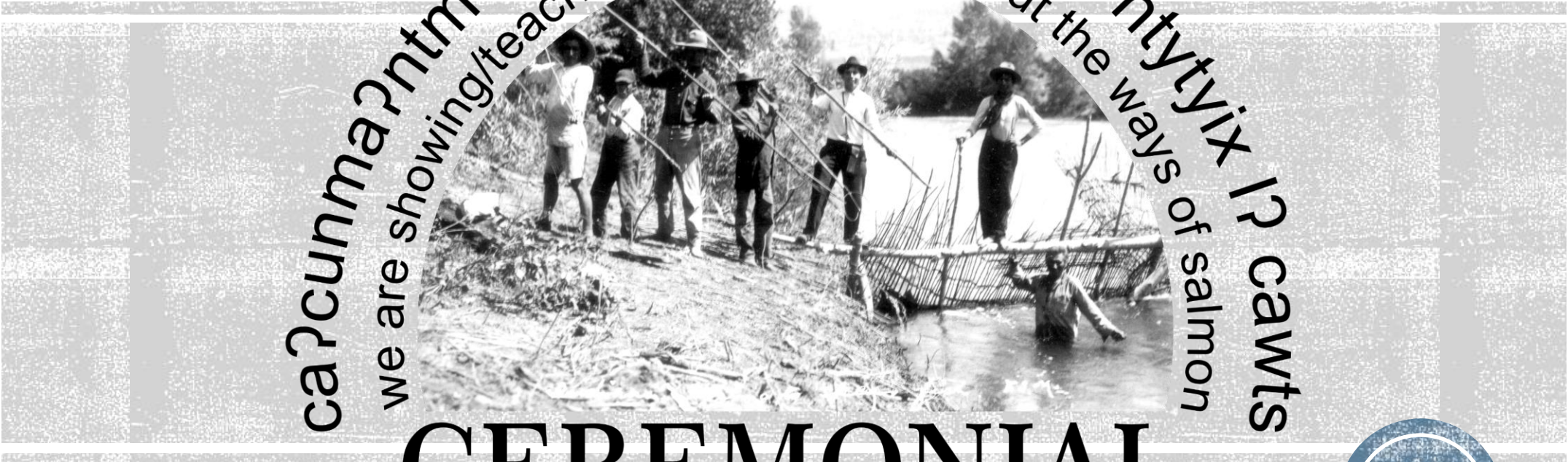


ca?cunma?ntm iq sqwsq^wasiya?tət ta ntytyix iq cawts
we are showing/teaching our children about the ways of salmon

CEREMONIAL SALMON FISHERY

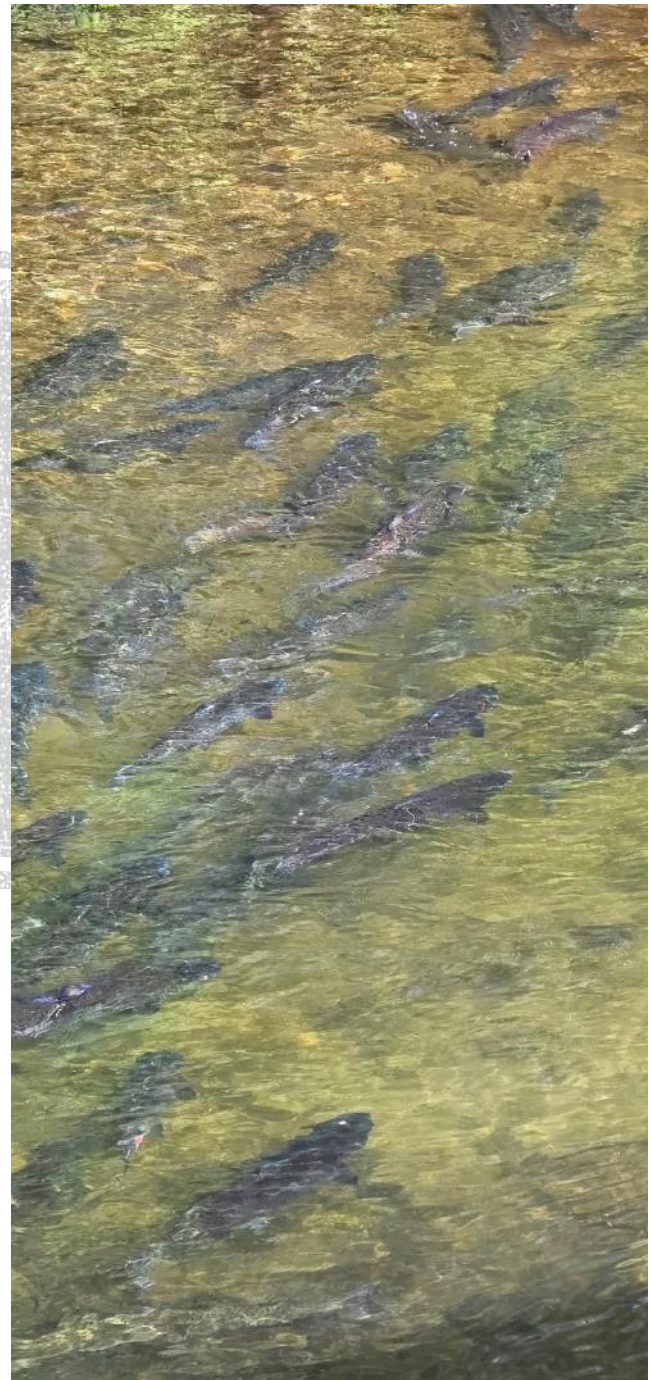
NESPELEM CREEK

AUGUST 5TH, 2025



Ceremonial Fishery at Nespelem Creek 2025





“We can get loyal to the future or stay loyal to the illegal past...”

-Jeannette Armstrong, June 26, 2018

At the “Adding Ecosystem Functions to the Columbia River Treaty Workshop”



**Lim'limtx' Thank You –
Questions?**

