

# Salmon are no longer kings of the Columbia

By ELI FRANCOVICH  
Columbia Insight

THE DALLES — In 1957, the steel gates closed on The Dalles Dam, upstream from Hood River, and one of North America's largest waterfalls was inundated with water.

With that, an important Indigenous cultural gathering place was flooded and an unforeseen ecological cascade triggered.

Now, 77 years later, often the most common fish found flopping up Bonneville Dam's fish ladders are nonnative shad, a silvery member of the herring family and the unlikely beneficiary of the flooding of Celilo Falls.

"The shad are, even though they run out to the ocean and come back, they are not great swimmers like salmon are," said John Epifanio, lead author of a newly published report examining the proliferation of shad in the Columbia River system.

Some years shad, which were introduced to the West Coast in the 1880s, make up more than 90% of recorded upstream migrants, according to an Independent Scientific Advisory Board report to the Northwest Power and Conservation Council published in November.

What impact these fish are having on native ocean-going



The Museum at Warm Springs/Contributed Photo  
**An array of cables, scaffolds and platforms at Celilo Falls enabled access to fishing grounds until The Dalles Dam began operating in 1957.**

species like salmon and steelhead still isn't clear. While the report doesn't offer any definitive answers, it does show how ecological disruptions, whether from hydroelectric development or climate change, can hurt one species while benefiting another.

The former horseshoe-shaped Celilo Falls is a prime example.

Before the dam began operating, the falls dropped 40 feet. Migrating steelhead and salmon battled up and over the falls during their yearly migration.

But, for the nonnative

shad the falls proved to be an un-navigable obstacle.

Now that the falls are submerged that's no longer the case.

### 'We're salmon people, not shad people'

Prior to 1960, there were fewer than 20,000 adult shad per year at Bonneville Dam, which is downstream of Celilo Falls.

After The Dalles Dam was built, that number rose to 1 million a year, and shad numbers have increased on average 5% each year. That means the shad popu-

lation is nearly doubling every decade, Epifanio said.

In addition to the removal of the physical barrier, the hydroelectric system also slowed the downstream flow of water, which raised overall water temperature. It's possible shad, which can survive a wider range of temperatures than salmon, have capitalized on that, too.

"There have been a lot of changes. It just seems to have favored these guys and they've taken advantage," said Epifanio.

Regardless of the cause, shad numbers have increased.

What's more, they're making it farther upstream and into the Snake River above Lower Granite Dam, said Jay Hesse, director of biological services for the Nez Perce Tribe's Department of Fisheries Resources Management. The tribe was not involved in the study.

"Their abundance is increasing to really notable levels," he said. "And their distribution at those higher levels is also expanding."

That's concerned Nez Perce biologists who worry shad may hurt their already struggling steelhead and salmon populations.

The report doesn't establish any direct link between the shad increase and the salmon and steelhead decrease. However, it does offer a few theories on how shad may negatively impact salmon.

For example, higher-than-normal shad numbers may be supporting a larger avian predator population and shad may be competing for food sources and nursery habitat.

Such a large-scale change in the Columbia Basin's migratory fish population is alarming ecologically.

And for people and cultures that venerate salmon, steelhead and lamprey, it also highlights the loss of a way of

life, said Anthony Capetillo, aquatic invasive species biologist for the Nez Perce tribe.

"We're a salmon people, not a shad people," he said.

### What's the problem?

Developing a commercial and recreational fishery in the West may be one way managers can control the proliferation of shad, said Stuart Ellis, harvest management biologist for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

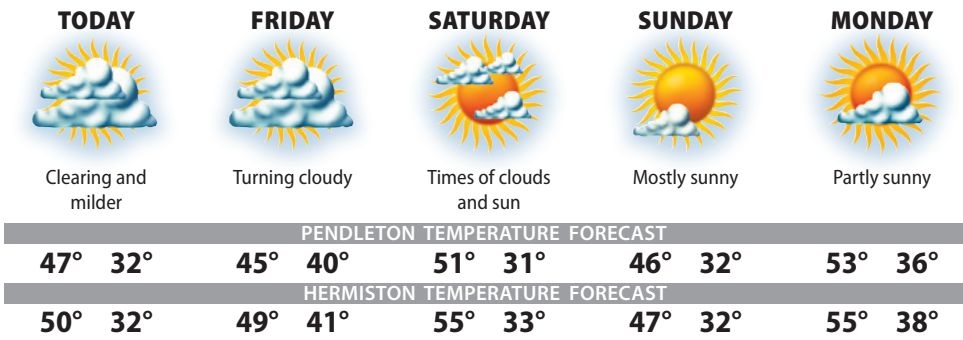
"It's a huge amount of protein, perfectly good protein," he said. "There is no reason not to catch these fish — we don't need them in the system."

The Wild Fish Conservancy also is examining experimental trapping methods that could trap shad while not accidentally trapping salmon, steelhead or other unintended species.

Epifanio and other researchers involved in the study hope their report prompts further investigation, particularly into how, or if, shad are hurting native species.

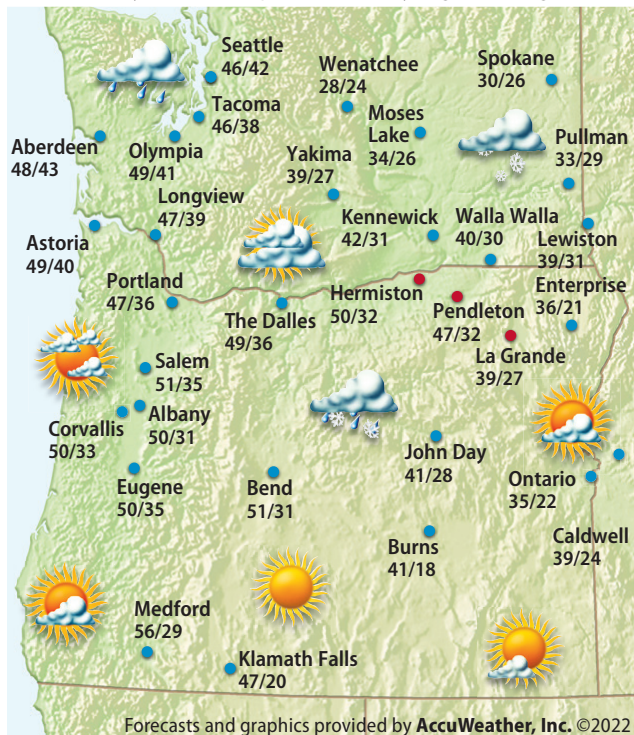
"At the very least, we just need to continue to monitor what these populations are doing in the basin," he said. "We hope that we don't just monitor. We want to have some solutions."

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

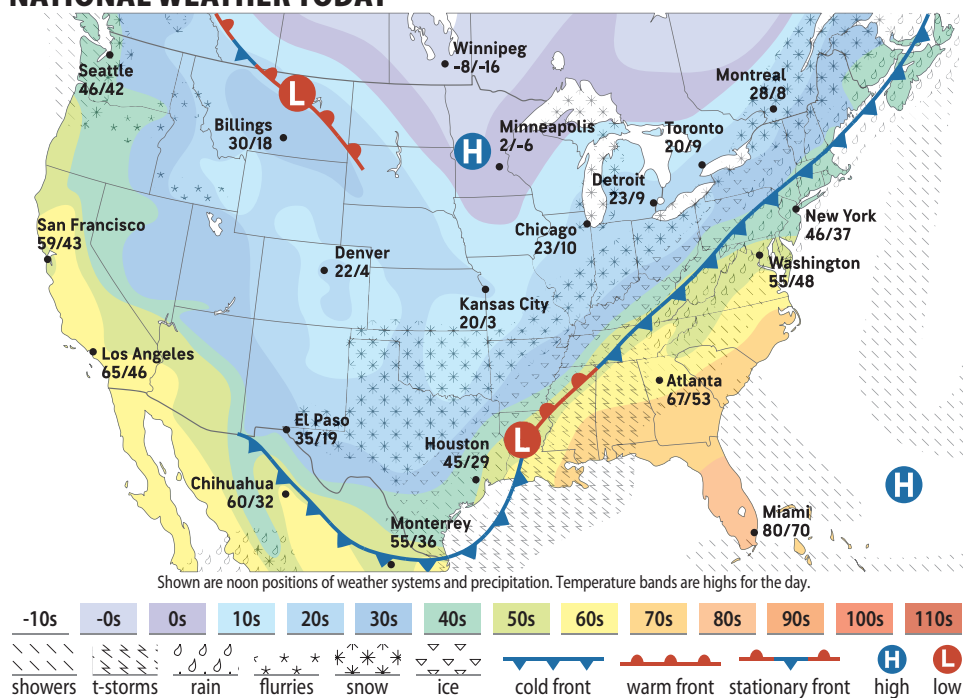
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	37°	24°	
Normals	44°	29°	
Records	66° (1934)	-18° (1950)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.02"		
Month to date	0.02"		
Normal month to date	0.09"		
Year to date	1.55"		
Last year to date	0.98"		
Normal year to date	1.63"		
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.			
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW	
Yesterday	39°	27°	
Normals	46°	29°	
Records	64° (1934)	-28° (1950)	
PRECIPITATION			
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.00"		
Month to date	0.00"		
Normal month to date	0.07"		
Year to date	0.93"		
Last year to date	0.66"		
Normal year to date	1.21"		
WINDS (in mph)			
Today	W 6-12	Fri. SW 6-12	
Pendleton	WSW 6-12	SSW 7-14	
SUN AND MOON			
Sunrise today	7:14 a.m.		
Sunset tonight	5:04 p.m.		
Moonrise today	9:01 a.m.		
Moonset today	8:16 p.m.		
First	Full	Last	New
Feb 8	Feb 16	Feb 23	Mar 2

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 85° in Zapata, Texas Low -27° in Willow City, N.D.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## Dean attorney disputes resignation

By BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — An attorney for the Bob Dean Oregon Ranches reached out Monday, Jan. 31, to dispute the circumstances by which former ranch manager B.J. Warnock left his job there, saying Warnock's departure was a "dismissal."

Attorney J. Logan Joseph, of the Joseph Law Firm in La Grande, confirmed in an email that Katie Romero, who comes from New Mexico according to her website, is the new manager "of all Dean family cattle operations in Wallowa County," and said that Warnock's "dismissal" was "on or about Jan. 17 of this year."

Warnock has not returned a request for clarification on the matter.

Romero has stated that her boss, Bob Dean's wife, Karen Dean, has forbidden her from speaking to the press. Bob Dean is suffering mental trauma following a surgery in June, Karen Dean said in early January, so she is speaking for him.

Joseph said he knows nothing of Wallowa County Sheriff Joel Fish's investigation for possible animal neglect other than the investigation is ongoing.

Fish confirmed Jan. 31 that he still is investigating.

The case involves hundreds of cattle that were trapped in heavy snows in the Upper Imnaha area late



Anna Butterfield/Contributed Photo, File  
**Calves rescued from the deep snows in the Upper Imnaha get some refreshment Jan. 2, 2022, at the Joseph-area ranch of Mark and Anna Butterfield. They are among many rescued in late 2021.**

last fall, and the cows were unable to get themselves or their calves to safety. It is believed at least two dozen mother cows died, some of which "literally 'milked themselves to death,' in an attempt to provide for their calves," Wallowa County Stockgrowers President Tom Birkmaier said Jan. 19.

Numerous rescued calves were taken in by area ranchers and cared for. It is still uncertain how many cattle were involved, but Warnock originally said there were more than 1,500 on summer pasture that they were trying to bring out last fall.

Birkmaier and others rallied fellow ranchers to try to rescue the cows and calves over the past month. The

effort included taking hay to the animals by snowmobile or dropping it by helicopter. It also included bringing cattle out on a trailer pulled by a tracked vehicle that was able to get into the animals after private and public efforts to open backcountry roads.

Joseph added in his email the Dean family's appreciation for the help of locals in rescuing the cattle and calves.

"The Dean family would like to thank all of the local ranchers and any other persons that assisted in the location and retrieval of these cattle," Joseph wrote. "It is truly encouraging to see a community come together in such a fashion under such circumstances."

## IN BRIEF

### 5 train cars derail, spill grain

BAKER CITY — Five cars on a west-bound freight train derailed Friday afternoon, Jan. 28, near Baker City, spilling grain.

The incident happened about 4 p.m. near Old Highway 30 about 1 mile south of the Milepost 306 interchange in south Baker City,

said Susan Stevens, manager of communications for Union Pacific Railroad.

The train crew was not injured, and the railroad resumed normal operations after several hours.

The case of the derailment is under investigation, Stevens said.

—EO Media Group

**CORRECTIONS:** The East Oregonian works hard to be accurate and sincerely regrets any errors. If you notice a mistake in the paper, please call 541-966-0818.

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