

Around Indian Country

# Lamprey return above dam site

Pacific lamprey have returned to the White Salmon River above the former site of Condit Dam.

The fact that the lamprey have been found above the former dam location signals an important step forward in habitat restoration, lamprey conservation and partnership in the Columbia River Basin, officials with the Yakama Nation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said.

"This is a good day," said Patrick Luke, Yakama Nation Tribal Councilman.

"We are recognizing asum (lamprey) making their mighty return to Mitula Wana (White Salmon)."

Sometimes referred to as the forgotten fish, Pacific lamprey are a traditional food source for the Native people, as well as a wide variety of wildlife species.

They spend their early years nestled in creek beds before transforming into parasitic adults that migrate to the ocean to feed for years before returning to spawn.

While not endangered, populations of lamprey are dropping dramatically across the Columbia Basin, in part because adult lamprey struggle to use the fish ladders designed for salmon at hydropower dams.

Staff from the Yakama Nation and the Fish and Wildlife Service began monitoring lamprey distribution in the basin in 2007.

Prior to the 2011 removal of Condit Dam—which blocked passage of upstream migrating fish for more than 100 years—surveys found no Pacific lamprey above the dam, only below.

Last summer, as part of

the post dam removal monitoring, the wildlife service surveyed for lamprey in several watersheds as well as the mainstem of the White Salmon River above and below the former dam site.

Pacific lamprey were found at three locations upstream of the former dam site, in areas previously inundated by Northwestern Reservoir.



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