



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

From left, Umatilla Board of Trustees member Corrine Sams, Sen. Ron Wyden, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission Executive Director Aja DeCoteau, Grand Ronde Tribal Council member and chair of the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission Kathleen George, EPA Region 10 Regional Administrator Casey Sixkiller and Sen. Jeff Merkley meet before an event at Broughton Beach off Marine Drive in Portland regarding the EPA Columbia River Basin Restoration Program on Wednesday, Aug. 10. The recently approved infrastructure law will fund \$79 million to reduce toxins in the Columbia River Basin.

EPA administrator visits Oregon, announces support for toxic reductions in Columbia

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

PORTLAND – Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan visited Oregon on Wednesday, Aug. 10, at the invitation of Sen. Jeff Merkley to, among other things, announce new investments from the recently passed infrastructure law that will support reducing toxins in the Columbia River Basin.

“EPA is taking decisive action to protect public health and the environment for Oregonians and people across the nation,” Regan said. “Thanks to Senator Merkley’s leadership, we passed the infrastructure law, investing billions in important work like the restoration of the Columbia River Basin, as we’re poised to make historic investments to combat the climate crisis through the Inflation Reduction Act, which will deliver relief to families dealing with the devastating impacts of our greatest climate challenges.”

At Broughton Beach off of Marine Drive in Portland, Regan, Merkley and U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, along with Tribal and state leaders, announced a five-year, \$79 million investment from the infrastructure law to protect the Columbia River Basin. This includes \$6.9 million in Clean Water Act grants to be

awarded this year for projects to reduce toxins in fish and water, and address climate impacts in communities.

Tribal Council member Kathleen George, who also serves at the chairwoman of the Oregon Environmental Quality Commission, also attended the event.

“The need is huge,” George said. “The time is now. Our fish and rivers can’t wait. We have built and fed our communities on the riches of our rivers. We have taken, but very rarely do we give back.”

Other Tribal attendees included Umatilla Board of Trustees member Corinne Sams, Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission Executive Director and Yakama Nation member Aja DeCoteau and EPA Region 10 Regional Administrator Casey Sixkiller.

The Columbia River Basin covers almost 260,000 square miles and spans 16 federally recognized Tribal nations and seven states from Oregon and Washington to Wyoming.

Over decades, it has been contaminated by toxic waste from agriculture, forestry, recreation and hydroelectric power generation, which has harmed the health of wildlife and left some fish species threatened, endangered or unsafe for consumption. ■

Distributing fish



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Natural Resources Department Aquatic Biologist Brandon Weems delivers frozen salmon during the 2022 Annual Fish Distribution held at the Fish Lab, 47010 S.W. Hebo Road, on Thursday, Aug. 18. Tribal members were able to pick up frozen salmon, along with one-pound bags of ground elk and five-pound bags of ground bear meat. The distribution continued on Friday, Aug. 19, and Saturday, Aug. 20. There also was a fish distribution at the Portland office, 4445 S.W. Barbur Blvd., on Wednesday, Aug. 24. Fish & Wildlife Program Manager Kelly Dirksen said the Tribe distributed 1,000 pounds of ground bear meat, 1,020 pounds of ground elk meat, 20,855 pounds of salmon filets and 211 lamprey to 1,024 Tribal members during both distributions. “It was a pretty incredible distribution this year,” Dirksen said. “The crew worked their tails off to make it happen.”



Field Biologist Kyle McLaughlin places five one-pound bags of ground elk into a box for Elders Activity Center Lead Cook Kevin Campbell during the 2022 Annual Fish Distribution held at the Natural Resources Department off Hebo Road on Thursday, Aug. 18.

Drop box installed

The Grand Ronde Tribal Police Department, 9655 Grand Ronde Road, now has a medication drop box located in the front lobby.

Lobby hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The drop box is for any prescribed or over-the-counter medication. If the containers are too large to fit in the drop box, please repackage them in a zip-lock plastic bag. Tribal Police employees cannot handle the medications so the person dropping them off must repackage them.

Needles and liquids are not allowed in the drop box.

Tribal Police suggest mixing liquid medications with cat litter or coffee grounds and then throwing them away with the household trash.

For more information, call 503-879-1821. ■

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- Small Appliances and Household Items
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