Columbia River Basin Restoration Program Success Stories from the 2020 Grant Projects

COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN RESTORATION PROGRAM

ABOUT THE COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN RESTORATION FUNDING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Congress amended the Clean Water Act in 2016, which required EPA to establish a Columbia River Basin Restoration Program. EPA was directed to develop a voluntary, competitive grant program for eligible entities to fund environmental protection and restoration programs throughout the Basin. Eligible entities include state, Tribal, and local governments; regional water pollution control organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and soil and water conservation districts. Funded work must be for the purpose of environmental protection and restoration activities within the Columbia River Basin; and may include programs, projects, and studies. EPA funded 14 projects in the 2020, inaugural round of grants that address the following four priorities:

1. *Increase monitoring and access data from monitoring.*
2. *Reduce stormwater and agricultural runoff.*
3. *Reduce toxics through small scale cleanup of non-CERCLA (also known as Superfund) contaminated sites.*
4. *Promote citizen engagement, education, and involvement to increase pollution prevention actions.*

In September of 2020, EPA was able to provide the full amount requested by successful grantees for a total of $2,053,903 in FY19 and FY20 grant funding. These are their stories of progress made to date.

CLEARWATER RIVER WATERSHED BASELINE MONITORING AND TOXICS ASSESSMENT (ID)

EPA awarded a grant of $200,000 to the **Nez Perce Tribe Water Resources Division** to monitor waters throughout the Clearwater River watershed on the Nez Perce Reservation and off-reservation waters in Idaho. The Clearwater flows through approximately 70 miles of the more than 770,000-acre Nez Perce Reservation in north-central Idaho and tribal members depend on the river for cultural and economic benefits. In this project, the Tribe is partnering with the **Idaho State Department of Agriculture**, the **University of Idaho**, and the **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** to conduct water quality monitoring.

The Nez Perce and partners are studying water samples for toxic chemicals, metals, and nutrients that can harm water quality. In addition to taking samples from the Clearwater and its tributaries, the project team will sample important aquatic animals like fish, mussels, and lamprey ammocoetes to see whether certain contaminants are present in their tissues. Finally, the Tribe will look at fish tissues to discover if microplastics—small particles of plastic that come from trash, wastewater, and other pollution—are present in the fish.

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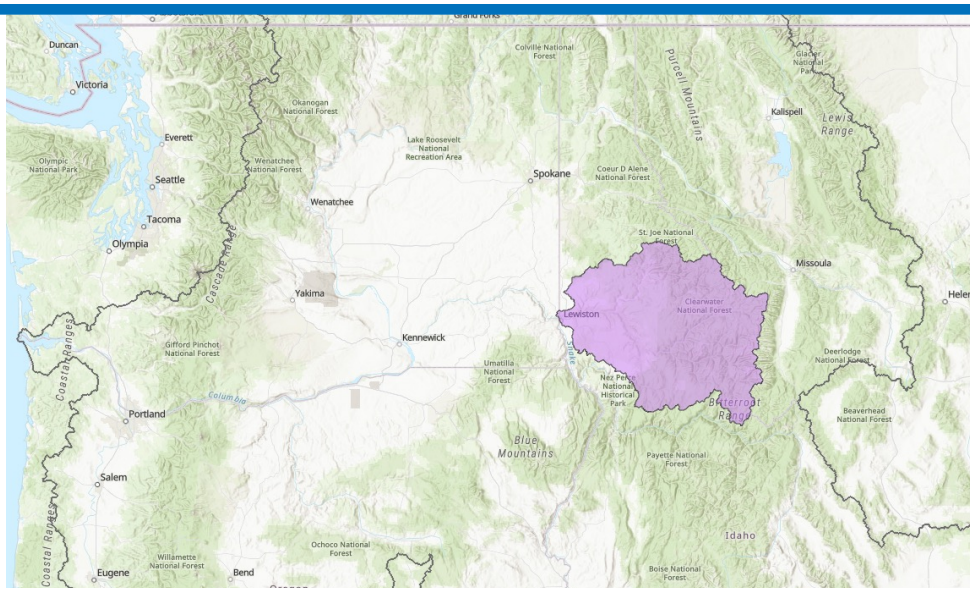
RESTORATION PROGRAM

"We are very proud of our division's hard work and teamwork to get their first year of sampling completed successfully despite the many challenges of COVID –19, wildfires and dry sampling sites."

– Sierra Higheagle, Water Quality Program Coordinator, Nez Perce Tribe Water Resources Division



The Clearwater River watershed project area in north-central Idaho.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

- Completed first year of sampling in October 2021. Conducted 96 analyses for toxics and nutrients from 14 sampling locations, sampled once a month during the sampling season.
- Established baseline data for the tributaries to the Clearwater River.
- From these data, the Tribe will determine the concentrations of pesticides, mercury, and metals in the surface water and sediment in selected tributaries.
- The data are now being processed and will be entered into the national water quality database known as the Water Quality Exchange (WQX).

WHAT'S NEXT? WHERE DOES THE NEZ PERCE TRIBE GO FROM HERE?

The Tribe will continue their surface water and sediment sample collection through 2022 and will add additional analyses including toxics in mussels and lamprey tissue and microplastics in fish.

To learn more, check out the Nez Perce Tribe Water Resources Division website: https://nptwaterresources.org/.

Richard Guzman collecting samples at Sixmile Creek