

COLUMBIA RIVERKEEPER®

2023 / Issue 1

# Currents

# HANFORD

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**THE FIGHT**  
to Clean Up  
the Most Polluted  
Place in America



Columbia Riverkeeper protects and restores the water quality of the Columbia River and all life connected to it, from the headwaters to the Pacific Ocean.

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# For the River

*On the cover: The Hanford Nuclear Site. Photo by Sky Bear Media (skybearmedia.com). This page: Geese take flight over the Columbia River's Hanford Reach. Photo by David Moskowitz (davidmoskowitz.net). Graphic Design by Melissa Delzio.*

The articles on pages eight to eleven were funded through a Public Participation Grant from the Washington Department of Ecology. The content was reviewed for grant consistency but is not necessarily endorsed by the agency.

**T**he first time I kayaked the Columbia River's Hanford Reach, I was confronted with the unexpected: the sheer beauty of the Columbia as a pulsing, wild river. The Hanford Reach spans 50 miles of undammed, free-flowing river and contains islands, riffles, gravel bars, oxbow ponds, and backwater sloughs. A journey back in time.

The Hanford Reach is the last remaining stretch of the mainstem Columbia River where fall Chinook salmon spawn in significant numbers. The ancient river and lakebed sediments that create the White Bluffs, part of the scenic Hanford Reach National Monument, rise up along the Columbia's banks.

The Hanford Reach is also home to the Hanford Nuclear Site. Covering more than 500 square miles, it's as big as Los Angeles—and is the most polluted place in America. In our first *Currents* of the year, we spotlight Columbia Riverkeeper's "Cleaning Up Hanford" program area, which works in solidarity with Tribal Nations to hold the U.S. government accountable for cleaning up Hanford and protecting all people who rely on a healthy Columbia.

**Here's some context if you're new to the issue:** Hanford is a legacy of World War II and the Cold War. In 1943, the federal government selected Hanford as a top-secret site for the Manhattan Project, which called for enriching plutonium for nuclear weapons. Concentrated plutonium manufactured at Hanford powered the nuclear bomb dropped on Nagasaki, Japan, in 1945. The U.S. continued producing plutonium at Hanford throughout the Cold War, enough for thousands of weapons, leaving behind an astounding toxic legacy. Since 1989, the U.S. government's stated mission at Hanford is cleanup.

**Our goals:** Honor tribal Treaty rights and protect people, the Columbia River, and all life that depends on it from Hanford's radioactive and toxic legacy. This requires advocating for timely, effective cleanup and the federal funding to get the job done.

**Our approaches:** Monitor government decisions on Hanford cleanup and support people with the facts and law to make a difference. We work in solidarity with Tribal Nations and in partnership with nonprofits, including Hanford Challenge and Heart of America Northwest, to increase public participation in critical cleanup decisions at Hanford. And we serve on the non-partisan Hanford Advisory Board that provides recommendations on Hanford cleanup.

As a Columbia Riverkeeper supporter, you make a difference for Hanford cleanup. From advocating for more effective groundwater-treatment facilities to stopping proposals to make Hanford a national nuclear waste dumping site, your involvement has changed the course of history at Hanford. With your support, Columbia Riverkeeper will continue to hold the U.S. government accountable and protect the Columbia for generations to come.



*Lauren*

Lauren Goldberg, *Executive Director*

# A Race Against Time

## A Brief Timeline of Hanford



### Since time immemorial,

Indigenous people and Tribes, including Tribes and Bands that now make up the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Wanapum Tribe, lived and fished in the region now known as Hanford.

**1855** Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and Nez Perce signed treaties with the United States that reserve their rights to hunt, fish, and gather in “all usual and accustomed places,” which included the area near the Columbia River that would later be called Hanford.

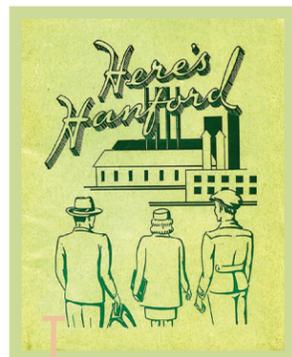


**1943** Indigenous people who lived in the Hanford area were forced to relocate without compensation, breaking the treaty. White settlers were also removed and are poorly compensated.

**1943-1963** The U.S. built the Hanford Nuclear Site, establishing three nuclear reactors along the Columbia River, along with massive facilities to extract and process the plutonium created. Parts of Hanford become intensely radioactive: some of this toxic and radioactive contamination still reaches the Columbia River decades later. In 1945, the U.S. military dropped the atomic bomb—containing plutonium created at Hanford—on Nagasaki, Japan, killing 60,000 to 80,000.

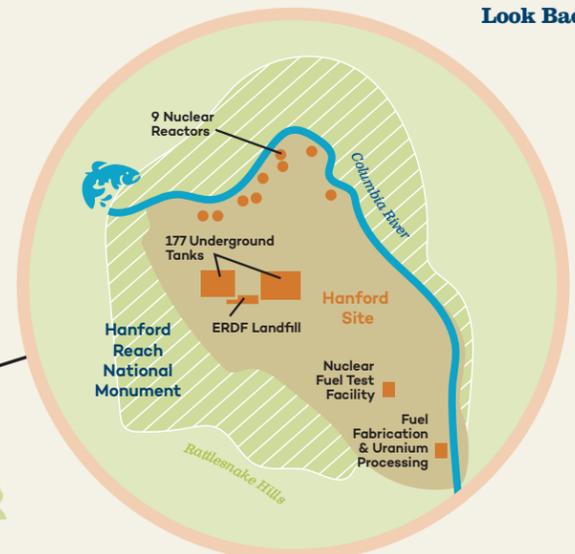


*Hanford's workforce included around 15,000 Black people fleeing the Jim Crow South, but these workers were paid less and not offered full-time employment. Photo from 1944.*



*Hanford brochure created by Hanford Engineer Works in 1944.*

**1963-1987** During the Cold War, additional reactors were constructed next to the Columbia River, bringing the total to **nine** with **177 underground tanks** that contained high-level radioactive waste. In the 60s, a new type of reactor produced plutonium for atomic weapons as well as generating electricity, causing President John F. Kennedy to visit for its dedication. This “N Reactor” ran until 1987.



**1989** Federal and state governments officially switched the mission at Hanford to cleanup.

**2000** The Dept. of Energy (Energy) begins to remove 2,535 tons of irradiated nuclear fuel in an aging basin along the Columbia River, a major accomplishment in cleanup.

**2004** Energy removes liquids from 149 tanks containing high-level waste, declaring them “stable.” Yet, highly dangerous solids, sludge, and liquid remained in the tanks containing huge quantities of radioactive and toxic pollutants.



**2010-2013** Lethally radioactive soil pollution is discovered beneath a building a few hundred yards from the Columbia River. Additional tank leaks are discovered.

**2015-2019** Dozens of workers are sickened by chemical vapors released from tank farms, and a tunnel containing highly radioactive waste partially collapses. This highlighted the dangers to the people who have worked for decades to protect the environment and the public from toxic waste.

*The Hanford Reach National Monument is home to: 43 species of fish, 42 species of mammals, and 258 species of birds.*



*Sample of vitrified glass at U.S. Dept. of Energy Office of River Protection.*

**2021-2022** Energy issued a final cleanup plan, acknowledging an ongoing ecological risk to the Columbia River from chromium and strontium-90. The first step was made in the process of vitrifying tank waste. Vitrification is the transformation of a substance into a glass, which Energy plans to do in 2024.

### The future

The cleanup along the river remains far from complete. Our advocacy must spur cleanup and long-term solutions to protect everyone who relies on the Columbia.



Scan to view an expanded timeline.



## A Track Record of Protecting the Columbia

Since 2000, Columbia Riverkeeper and our partners have advocated for effective, timely cleanup at Hanford. Together, we have:

**Successfully advocated that U.S. government regulators address toxic hexavalent chromium contamination,** which was upwelling into salmon habitat near retired plutonium reactors. The government delved into cleanup with deep digs in the River Corridor, reducing the amount of chromium entering the river.

**Encouraged the U.S. Dept. of Energy to invest in groundwater treatment.**

Now the massive pump-and-treat system near some of the worst pollution at Hanford has treated billions of gallons of groundwater, removing tons of toxic and radioactive pollution before it can reach the Columbia.

**Blocked multiple proposals to make Hanford a dump site** for so-called “Greater Than Class C” radioactive waste and toxic mercury waste. The mission at Hanford must be cleanup, not dumping ground.

**Engaged our members to challenge the Trump administration’s proposal** to reduce the size of the Hanford Reach National Monument—and won. The Trump administration’s shortsighted proposal could have jeopardized the Hanford Reach’s natural, cultural, and fisheries resources.

No matter how long it takes, Columbia Riverkeeper will advocate for cleanup at Hanford.

# Stand Up for Cleanup

By Dan Serres, Conservation Director  
& Simone Anter, Staff Attorney

Decades after ceasing plutonium production, the Hanford Nuclear Site remains the most toxic and radioactive place in the Western Hemisphere. The stark reality: contamination from Hanford still reaches the Columbia River. Without effective cleanup, more pollution threatens to escape into the environment in the coming decades. For example, at Hanford, cancer-causing strontium-90 levels in groundwater near the Columbia are 2000 times above the drinking water standard. Radiation levels in soils are lethally dangerous just a few hundred yards from the Columbia. Cleanup along the Columbia remains far from complete.

Let’s not forget about climate change and earthquakes. From threatening the stability of aging infrastructure to changing the movement of radioactive and toxic groundwater from increased rainfall, climate change poses unique risks at Hanford. Like some sort of twisted golden ticket, when talking about nuclear threats, earthquakes, and climate change risks to humanity, Hanford has it all.

*Nuclear reactors line the riverbank at the Hanford Site along the Columbia River in January 1960.  
Credit: U.S. Dept. of Energy.*

## Five Ways You Will Make a Difference in 2023

As a Columbia Riverkeeper supporter, here are five key ways you will fight for Hanford cleanup this year.

### 1. Advocate for River Corridor and Groundwater Cleanup

Columbia Riverkeeper is calling on the U.S. Dept. of Energy (Energy) to address pollution near the Columbia in a way that protects people’s health and the environment. Energy’s cleanup plans should not permanently restrict access to large tracts of the so-called River Corridor. Instead, those plans should maximize returning the Columbia to unrestricted use and honor Tribes’ treaty-reserved rights to use Hanford.

### 2. Oppose Proposals to Shortcut Cleanup of High-Level Waste

Energy must treat high-level waste as the law requires. This means Energy must treat, immobilize, and remove high-level waste from Hanford. Energy’s proposals to redefine high-level waste, abandon high-level waste in tanks, or use shortcuts that limit short-term costs (such as using unproven grout rather than turning waste into a glass) would prolong and exacerbate risks to groundwater. That’s why Columbia Riverkeeper continues to vocally oppose cleanup shortcuts.

### 3. Prevent Tank Leaks

Today, there are 177 underground storage tanks at Hanford, holding about 56 million gallons of highly radioactive and chemically hazardous waste. According to the Washington Dept. of Ecology (Ecology), all of the tanks are well past their design life of about 25 years, and at least 67 are assumed to have leaked in the past, and two are currently

leaking. More than one million gallons have leaked from the tanks. Columbia Riverkeeper will continue to advocate for Energy and Ecology to accelerate efforts to prevent future tank leaks, respond to leaks where they occur, and address tanks that have already failed.

### 4. Prioritize Cleanup at the Waste Encapsulation Storage Facility

Columbia Riverkeeper is advocating for Energy to move as quickly as possible to remove highly radioactive cesium and strontium capsules from the Waste Encapsulation Storage Facility (WESF), the highest-risk facility at Hanford. WESF contains tens of millions of curies of radioactive material, almost one-third of all the radioactivity in Hanford’s waste sites. If the aging water-filled basins were to fail, cesium and strontium could be released into the environment.

### 5. Spotlight the Risks of New Commercial Nuclear Reactors

As if cleaning up the legacy of nuclear weapons production wasn’t enough, a company, X-energy, proposed siting small modular nuclear reactors (SMR) at Hanford on property leased to private entities. It’s a bad idea. In 2021, Columbia Riverkeeper released an in-depth report on SMRs at Hanford and sounded the alarm. Great news: In March 2023, X-Energy withdrew its proposal. Columbia Riverkeeper will continue to track and raise awareness about proposals to increase commercial nuclear reactors near the river. 

# Hanford Cleanup Champions

## An Interview With Yakama Nation's Hanford Cleanup Team

Last summer, the Hanford Journey returned after a two-year hiatus. Nearly 200 people gathered along the Columbia River, upstream from the Hanford Nuclear Site, to celebrate resiliency and hope for a thorough cleanup. Columbia Riverkeeper's Simone Anter spoke with Yakama Nation's Environmental Restoration Waste Management (ERWM) program staff about their experiences co-planning the Journey—and why Hanford is a place worth fighting for.

### What was your favorite memory of last year's Hanford Journey?

**Laurene Contreras, ERWM Program Director:** That's hard to answer but I really enjoyed the night before the event kick-off, when the canoe family came in. [The night before the Journey, ERWM and Columbia Riverkeeper hosted a dinner at the Legends Casino to ground the upcoming event, and share stories and food.] We heard from Yakama Nation Tribal Government, ERWM, Columbia Riverkeeper staff, and our guests of honor, the Puyallup Canoe Family.

Overall, I also really enjoyed the activities throughout the day and it was really neat to get out on the water and enjoy the scenery. It reminded me of Atwai Russell Jim [the founder of ERWM and a renowned advocate for Hanford cleanup], and what he always said, "It's not what you see but what you don't see." When you are out there, you see the beauty of the area but not the pollution. But that pollution, it's real. It's surreal when you are impacted by that thought that the pollution is right there and not going away. That's why it's so important to have these events to remind our people that these are our lands and we are not going anywhere.

### What is one current cleanup challenge at Hanford everyone should know about?

**McClure Tosch, ERWM Technical Staff:** The fact that we are getting final Records of Decisions (RODs) in the River Corridor does not mean that the River Corridor is cleaned up, it just means that the actions to be taken have been finalized in the federal government's eyes. [A ROD is a public document that explains the remediation cleanup plan at a Superfund site.] There is still an opportunity under the federal cleanup process to get more cleanup if those actions in the ROD don't meet the criteria, or the timeline doesn't meet the proposed plan. I want everyone to understand that and continue to push the Tri-Parties [the U.S. Dept. of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Washington Dept. of Ecology] to make sure these cleanups are protective of human health and the environment.

### What is ERWM's role in the Hanford cleanup?

**Rose Ferri, ERWM Technical Staff:** I would sum it up in one word: compliance. There's this ideology that it's the federal government's responsibility for cleanup, so they follow federal laws. But that's not really true in all cases. Laws are written with a certain amount of ambiguity and they are subject to interpretation. The federal government has its interpretation and we have ours, so we deal with that all the time.

We also deal with outright non-compliance with the law. We have seen this with cultural resources under the National Historic Preservation Act. So our role in

"It's so important to have these events to remind our people that these are our lands and we are not going anywhere."

*Laurene Contreras, ERWM Program Director, shown here at the 2022 Hanford Journey.*



reviewing documents and cleanup plans related to Hanford is to make sure the federal government is in compliance, that they are using the best science and answering the right questions.

### Can you explain the significance of the Hanford area to Yakama Nation?

**Trina Sherwood, Cultural Specialist at ERWM:** Our Ancestral lands of the Yakama Nation lie within the Hanford Site. Our Tribal members are the ongoing and upcoming stewards of these lands due to our connection to the cultural landscapes and resources that define and embody our heart, mind, and soul. Our elders have long established

through our unwritten laws that we must embrace our intricate relationship with the living culture of animals, sacred foods/medicines and the Creator who blessed us with these and our breath of life.

Creator showed us our "way of life" through life/death experiences of our people to continue our language, songs, and gathering our foods/resources through ceremonial teachings handed down since time immemorial. This is our "Circle of Life" to instill in our youth the importance of their role in their

Tribe, family, and communities. Our reserved rights in the Treaty of 1855 have been violated by the contamination of our ceded lands. 🌿

### About the ERWM Program:

The ERWM program addresses all technical and cultural aspects related to the Hanford cleanup. The Yakama Nation's ultimate goal is to have the site cleaned to a point where future generations do not have to worry about contamination and radiation.



To view photos from the 2022 Hanford Journey, scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/Hanford-Journey-2022](https://bit.ly/Hanford-Journey-2022)

*Left to right: Denise Reed, Puyallup and Quileute cultural coordinator of Pullayup Canoe Family; Ellia-Lee Jim, Miss Yakama Nation '22-'23; and Columbia Riverkeeper Staff Attorney Simone Anter. Photos on this page by Sky Bear Media.*



# Generational Advocacy

Since 2017, Columbia Riverkeeper has partnered with Yakama Nation's Environmental Restoration Waste Management Program (ERWM) to fund a portion of the program's outreach and education position, the STEM coordinator. In the following essay, ERWM STEM Coordinator Samantha Redheart reflects on the intersection of educational sovereignty and fostering the next generation of Hanford cleanup advocates.



*By Samantha Redheart, STEM Coordinator, Yakama Nation Environmental Restoration Waste Management Program*

I am an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. I have worked for the Yakama Nation for more than 23 years and started at the Environmental Restoration Waste Management Program (ERWM) in 2009. I enjoy learning about Hanford past, present and future. I am dedicated to ethical Yakama values, am a fast learner, and enjoy a challenge. In 2009 I started as the program bookkeeper, then transitioned to a procurement position and now I am the STEM Coordinator.

If you happen to have people in your genealogy who have done great things, you might find that you want to further their accomplishments. My maternal grandparents are the late Clara and Aleck Sohappy. Look up *Sohappy v. Smith*, 302 F. Supp. 899 (D. Or. 1969), a federal case heard by the United States District Court for the District of Oregon, decided in 1969 and amended in 1975. It began with 14 members of the Yakama who sued the state of Oregon over its fishing regulations. My paternal grandparents are the late Audrie and Jesse Redheart. The city of Vancouver, WA, hosts an annual Chief Redheart remembrance ceremony that honors those held captive in the Nez Perce war. The ceremony is meant to serve as a reminder of the events, but also, to heal. It is important to me to teach my children and grandson to learn and to honor the elders in our community and those who died before them. It is our heritage and where we come from. It is also important that non-Indians come to understand our people.

*Photos to right: Birds at the Hanford Reach. Columbia Riverkeeper Board President Emily Washines' daughter, Zora Adele Shellenberger (Yakama), participated in the 2022 Hanford Journey. Photos by Sky Bear Media.*

**“I’m sharing why Hanford needs your voice. I need to look out for my people.”**

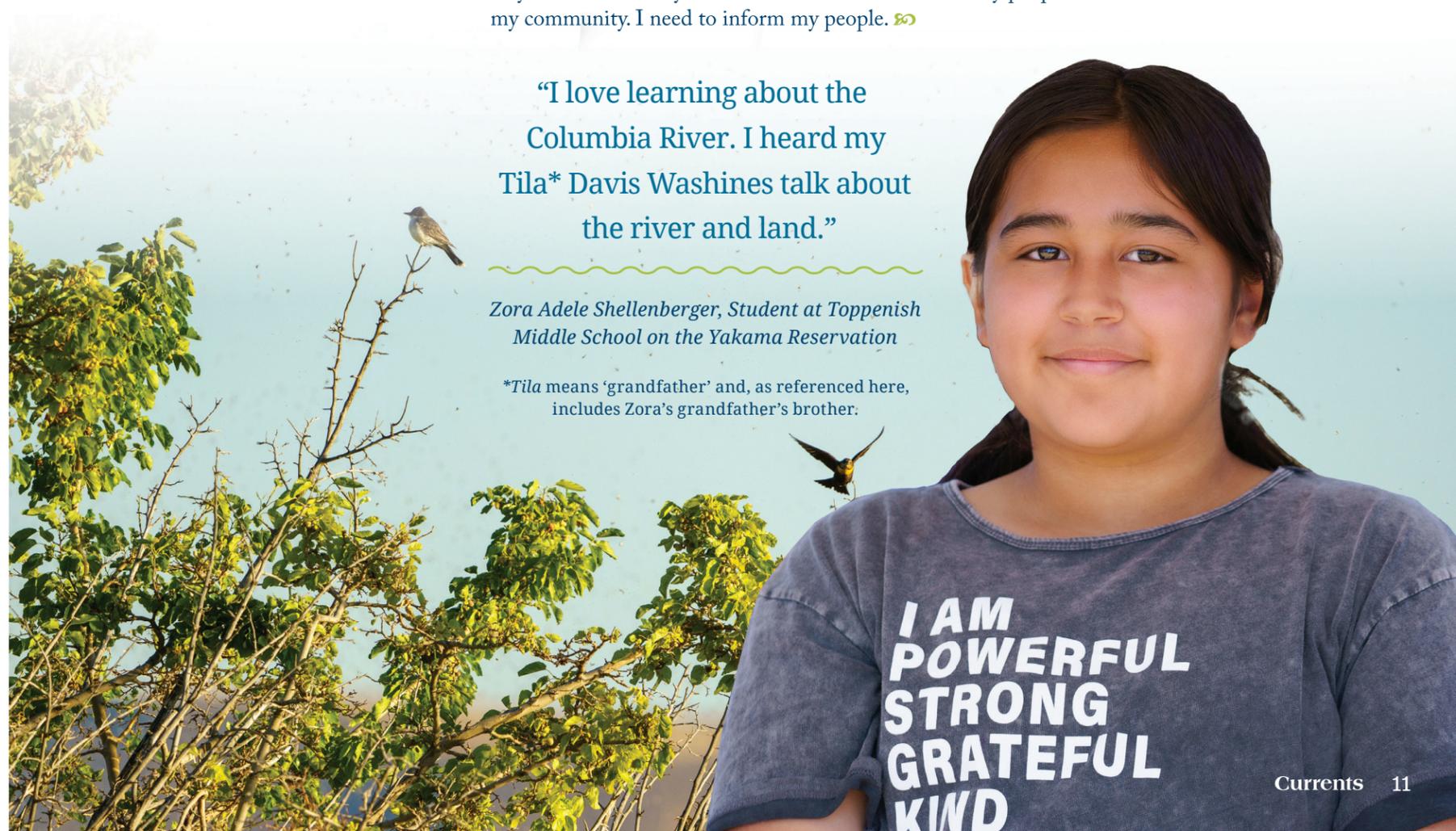
Currently, I help plan and facilitate Hanford educational outreach to Yakama Nation members, community and youth. My goal is to get tribal youth interested in environmental STEM fields related to ongoing cleanup activities at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. This is based on the shortage of qualified engineers, scientists, technologists, managers, and analysts needed to clean up the environment damaged by nuclear and hazardous waste materials. I also provide Yakama Nation members and community with necessary skills to make informed decisions and take responsible action. Hanford's future will depend on the next generation's advocacy for a cleanup that is thorough and just.

Yakama Nation ERWM has collaborated with Columbia Riverkeeper to facilitate Hanford nuclear waste presentations for students in grades 8-12 who identify themselves as affiliates of a recognized tribe. We hosted successful Hanford events with everyone fully engaged and eager to learn. I would describe myself as naively enthusiastic about reaching out to further develop skills through communicating Hanford science to diverse audiences, mentoring, and training junior scientists. I'm sharing why Hanford needs your voice. I need to look out for my people. I know my community. I need to inform my people. 🌱

**“I love learning about the Columbia River. I heard my Tila\* Davis Washines talk about the river and land.”**

*Zora Adele Shellenberger, Student at Toppenish Middle School on the Yakama Reservation*

\*Tila means 'grandfather' and, as referenced here, includes Zora's grandfather's brother.



# The Land Speaks

By Simone Anter (Jicarilla Apache and Yaqui), Staff Attorney



## Inspiring Action Through the Arts

**Columbia Riverkeeper advocates for Hanford cleanup using the best available science, the law, community organizing, and education. Tackling the most polluted place in America also demands creativity and hope. That's why, through film, art, creative writing, and powerful events, we inspire people to fight for Hanford cleanup.**

**Case in point: the vivid watercolors by Try Cheatham, including the painting on this page, brought to life Columbia Riverkeeper's interactive online storymap, "Water's Walk Through Hanford."**

I'm often forgotten. Even though I am always underfoot, those above me often pay me no mind, even when they are destined to mix within my strata, lending their DNA into the fabrication of my being. Now don't get me wrong, I'm not always forgotten. Sometimes I'm studied, poked and prodded, layers counted, mapped, surveyed; the treasures of each layer cataloged, studied, added to theories, museums, private collections. Other times I'm extracted, bled, misshapen, re-shaped, poisoned. I am climbed, drawn, used as a symbol for entire movements.

So it's not completely true to say I'm forgotten, maybe ignored is more accurate or maybe it's that no one is hearing what I want to say. People forget to listen for my stories and the songs I sing as my layers shift and move. As the ebb and flow of water over time and sometimes all at once carved the layers visible today, as weather: snow, rain, fires, and earthquakes shaped those layers, and cracks reverberated. For I like to talk, see? I like for people to hear a millennia of thoughts that haven't been listened to in generations.

In some places, I can more easily grasp at a wandering imagination, drawing attention down to my surface to explore—myriad rocks and pebbles. I can stop people as the sun hits, golden, reflecting off a wild river, wrapping around my curves. Like I said, these are my favorite places.

One such place can be found in the channeled scablands of Eastern Washington along the Columbia's Hanford Reach. Here my voice is so strong that it wraps with the wind, wildly twisting, rushing, gusting. Causing birds to rollercoaster in the air, dirt to devil swirl, and tumbleweeds to raucously race. If you are ever lucky enough to walk through the sage shrub brush that grows here, thick and untamed with prickly tendrils that scratch at your legs, be sure to listen for me.

I like to talk about how people have tried to take my power here, a military style assault on my being. Excavating my skin to build their reactors, harnessing my veins to cool these reactors. Burying toxic chemicals deep in trenches and burial grounds all around, creating such contamination that they make themselves sick, as well as me. Storing dangerously hot liquids in tanks, time bombs of radioactivity that leak and seep deeper within my layers, traveling with the water found there and upwelling back on the surface. The immensity of the problem is lost on the people, because they are finite and cannot comprehend the magnitude of what they have done.

**People have tried to take my power here, but see, it cannot be taken.**

Inadvertently, my power has grown. Paradoxically, I have also had the chance to flourish. Sealed away from the development and farming

that has stolen the wilderness from my flesh in other areas, I have been allowed to be me, cultivating a vast shrub steppe ecosystem, the largest in the West, on top of my basalt and quartz bones.

Animals gather here, ever present to my grumblings and always a part of me. Hundreds of different birds tell my stories, a chorus of chattering and chirping carried on the wind. Herds of elk meander through my vast and treeless plain, their hooves churning up my hardened soils to ensure that vegetation can continue to grow. Coyotes plod through lupines, porcupines forage. In my veins, my wild, free-flowing veins, salmon begin and end their life.

My power grows here. It is almost tangible. I can almost tap a lone traveler on the shoulder, cause them to look around and marvel at the awesomeness of me. For all who come here remember. I am much more than what some have named me here, the Hanford Nuclear Site, the Hanford Reach, Saddle Mountain Wildlife Refuge, the Hanford Reach National Monument. I am me, I am the Land, and this is where I speak. 🌀

*Illustrations by Try Cheatham*



## Water's Walk Through Hanford

Check out Columbia Riverkeeper's most recent creative foray. "Water's Walk Through Hanford" is an interactive story told from the perspective of a drop of water. The story brings lessons on Hanford to life for students and adults. Available in English and Spanish.



Visit [bit.ly/hanford-report](https://bit.ly/hanford-report) or scan the QR code to dive in.



# Where Grief and Hope Can Coexist



By Dianne Riley,  
Sustaining Gifts  
Director

“Hope locates itself in the premises that we don’t know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act.” ~ Rebecca Solnit

Photo by Kiliiii Yüyan

In 1982 I took my first foray into political activism, attending the Rally for Nuclear Disarmament in New York City. A friend and I were the youngest among a loosely organized group of Midwesterners who traveled by school bus through most of the day and night to Manhattan. I remember being relaxed yet energized walking down to join the throng in Central Park. We never made it that far. Every street in midtown was clogged with one million protesters from across the country and around the world, shoulder to shoulder, chanting, singing, voices echoing off buildings. We shared food, hugs, and tears with strangers. To swim in that sea of humanity and experience the expression of our calm determination was to plumb the depths of collective grief co-mingling with hope.

In the years since, my fear of nuclear destruction has shifted substantially, but it remains just as motivating. Progress toward limiting nuclear armament around the world

has happened largely under the radar of common knowledge and public discourse in the U.S.

Last summer, I joined the Hanford Journey, a day-long event organized by Yakama Nation in collaboration with Columbia Riverkeeper. In the months after, I debriefed with participants to see what the takeaways were. Generally speaking, we shared a sense of how daunting it is to contemplate “cleanup.” For example, considering the estimated 25,000 years required to babysit what is currently 56 million gallons of nuclear waste, does it make sense to expect success that far in the future?

To think about managing nuclear waste is to confront the limits of our civilization. It is an exercise that drifts quickly into the unknown and unknowable. Recently, I came across an essay by writer, historian, and activist Rebecca Solnit that lifted up these limitations as opportunity—an opportunity to act.

**Solnit writes:** Hope locates itself in the premises that we don’t know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act. When you recognize uncertainty, you recognize that you may be able to influence the outcomes—you alone or you in concert with a few dozen or several million others. Hope is an embrace of the unknown and the unknowable, an alternative to the certainty of both optimists and pessimists.

[...]

It is the belief that what we do matters even though how and when it may matter, who and what it may impact, are not things we can know beforehand. . . . history is full of people whose influence was most powerful after they were gone.

~ Rebecca Solnit, writer, historian, and activist

I find that the sober certainty that we will all someday be gone is perfectly counterbalanced by the fact that I don’t really know what death is or where it takes us. This potent combination of certain and uncertain parts of human experience is ripe for the type of action that is legacy giving. Why not hope that you matter and your life makes a difference? I appreciate Solnit’s approach: let us dream our hopes into this space of uncertainty so that at least some of us might find out down the line that such dreams acted upon are powerful enough to recreate our world anew. ✨

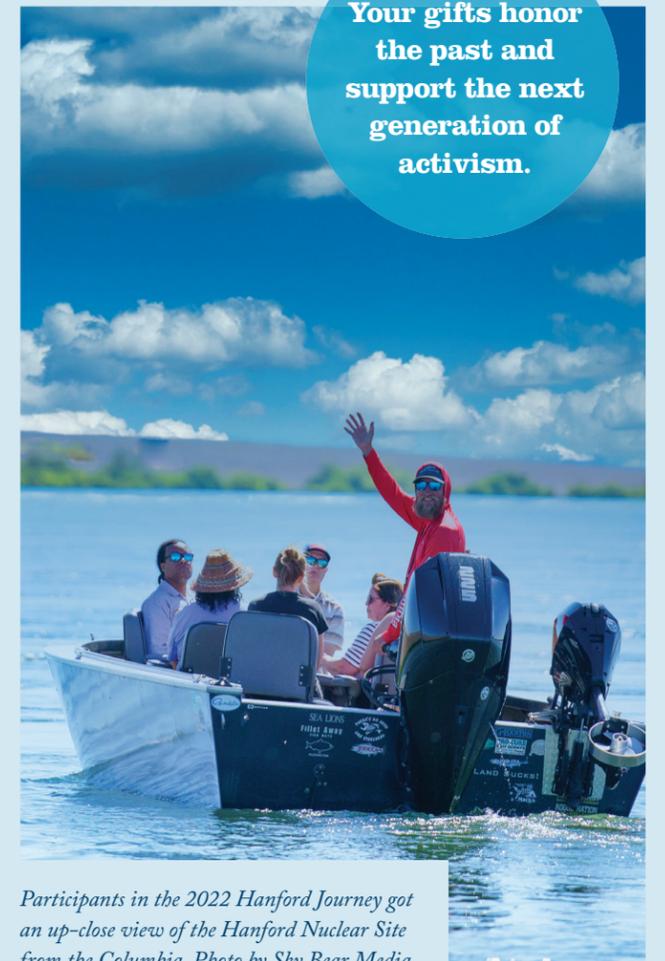
## Leave a Legacy

Hanford needs the kind of love and commitment that will last “forever.” You can be a part of that “forever love” with a legacy gift. Legacy gifts provide significant support to critical causes like Columbia Riverkeeper by channeling your largest lifetime gifts as part of your will or trust.



**Get started:**  
Contact Dianne Riley  
dianne@columbiariverkeeper.org  
541-399-3260  
[columbiariverkeeper.org/legacy-giving](https://columbiariverkeeper.org/legacy-giving)

Your gifts honor the past and support the next generation of activism.



Participants in the 2022 Hanford Journey got an up-close view of the Hanford Nuclear Site from the Columbia. Photo by Sky Bear Media.



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A watercolor illustration of several salmon swimming in a river over a bed of colorful, rounded stones. The salmon are depicted in various shades of red, pink, and blue, with detailed scales and fins. The stones are in shades of green, yellow, and brown.

# Support a Clean Columbia



**Tax season is here!** Let Columbia Riverkeeper make taxes a little less taxing. More and more people are making tax-smart donations from donor-advised funds and retirement accounts, or leaving a legacy gift in their estate plans. You can also contribute online or via mail today, set up monthly giving, or donate stocks.

[www.ColumbiaRiverkeeper.org/Ways-Give](http://www.ColumbiaRiverkeeper.org/Ways-Give)



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*Watercolor by  
Cheri Gavin*