



COLUMBIA RIVER INTER-TRIBAL FISH COMMISSION

700 NE Multnomah Street, Suite 1200
Portland, Oregon 97232

(503) 238-0667
www.critfc.org

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Glenda Lovejoy
Chair, Lyle Community Council
Lyle, WA 98635
lylecouncil@gmail.com

Dear Chair Lovejoy:

Each spring, over 100 million salmonid and Pacific lamprey juveniles migrate from Washington, Oregon, and Idaho rivers and streams into the Columbia River on their way to the Pacific Ocean. Historically, this migration took a week or less, propelled by high spring flows in an undammed river system. Today, however, the migration takes months, with gulls, Caspian terns, American white pelicans, double crested cormorants, and other avian predators taking advantage of the situation and preying on smolts at river deltas, dams, and hatcheries, feasting on juvenile salmonids and lamprey. Scientists estimate smolt losses are in the millions annually and are a major setback to restoration efforts in the Klickitat River and the Columbia River basin.

To address this issue, the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) and Yakama Nation implemented a pilot project this spring to haze avian predators on the Klickitat River delta where fluctuating water levels make smolts vulnerable to avian predators, primarily gulls. In addition to hazing, lethal take of gulls has been permitted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service to analyze their diet preferences and reinforce non-lethal efforts. Similar work also occurs at dams and on the Umatilla and Yakima rivers and in the mid-Columbia River around the Tri-Cities.

The hazing efforts used shotgun-powered pyrotechnic shells (i.e. noise makers) while specimen collections for research used standard waterfowl hunting shells. The delta was selected due to the history of high levels of avian predators and its overall distance from people and property. It was our intent to minimize any impactful noise associated with our work. Unfortunately, this was not always the case as we received several inquiries and noise complaints from Lyle residents. We apologize to those negatively affected by our activities.

Initially we anticipated our work would be completed by now; however strong numbers of smolts are still leaving the Klickitat River, gull numbers are increasing again, and we need additional gull diet samples. Given this, we anticipate hazing /collecting gulls 1-2 days per

week through June 2024, conditions permitting. Efforts will primarily be boat based, reducing the sound compared to land-based hazing. Our efforts earlier this year greatly reduced numbers of gulls and other avian predators, reducing their impact on juvenile salmonids and lamprey. We anticipate that hazing and collection efforts will need to continue in future years as the avian predation issue is an ongoing problem throughout the Basin.

My apologies for not reaching out to the Lyle community prior to starting the project early this spring. Going forward, CRITFC will notify the community and hold a meeting or provide informational materials. We look forward to working with the community to begin a collaborative process for a more respectful hazing effort next spring.

Moving forward, it is my hope, with this letter that a regular communication pathway has been established to have more harmonious efforts in the future and working together we can achieve our goal of increasing smolt survival in the Klickitat River basin.

Sincerely,

Blaine L. Parker

Blaine L. Parker
Avian Predation Coordinator
parb@critfc.org